

FOR A THOMIST FASCISM

*Commentary on the Doctrine of Fascism by Benito
Mussolini*

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“This is what must above all be the concern of the one who leads the human community: to bring about unity.”

– Saint Thomas Aquinas, De Regno

“Fascism is not a tactic — violence — ; it is an idea: unity.”

– José Antonio Primo de Rivera,
Textos de doctrina política

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PREFACE

For a Thomist Fascism. A bold title, if ever there was one, but one that has the merit, by being shocking, of attracting attention and, hopefully, intelligence.

At a time when all speech and writing are sanitized by the dominant thought, servant of Judaizing globalism, in a context where the highest apparent authorities of the Church become slaves to this uniformity deadly to faith and intelligence, at a time when even religious traditionalist or “traditionalizing” movements abandon the political sphere and cowardly and fearfully bow their heads before legalism and legal positivism, this book could not be more timely.

Going against the omnipresent Anglo-American sirens, present for nearly a century now in the European and political sphere, the author does not hesitate to exhume texts despised by dominant thought in order to analyze them through the lens of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Universal Doctor, of Aristotle, the Philosopher, or again of authors who are perfectly orthodox and, at the same time, Catholic and closer to us in time, such as Father Louis Lachance, O.P., or Abbé Julio Meinvielle.

Certainly, Mussolini had his faults and his limits — there is no doubt about that. But we must also consider that the realm of

politics has an inextricably contingent side that historical facts cannot deny. It is when human passions and the sensitivities of authorities clash that speculative analyses become more difficult and sometimes less objective.

It is therefore a genuine introspection that one must undertake before opening this study. For we must not forget that Pius XI, authoritarian as he was, said of Mussolini after the signing of the Lateran Accords that he was “the man of Providence.” This is no small thing. It suffices, moreover, to look beyond human prejudices and consider the economic, social, family, and political well-being achieved in Italy before the Second World War. This political achievement in Italy before the Second World War is owed not only to one man, but also to a program. Better still: it is owed to a doctrine, a political conception—fascism.

The present work delivers this political conception first by providing the texts of its theorists and then by commenting on them. It is enough for the attentive and persevering reader to understand that Mussolini was not a Thomist in the sense of someone who today would be described as having drawn directly from the writings of Saint Thomas, but that the Duce nevertheless remained inspired by the soundest principles, those of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, from whom the best concepts are derived. Mussolini’s realism thus drew from the foundations of Thomistic philosophy, concepts which the reader will find scattered throughout and which the author has rightly chosen to highlight.

An inevitable consequence of this political realism is that true human dignity is restored to honor. Not the human dignity promoted by modernists of every stripe. Rather, it concerns the strong man of Italy, who brings dignity to its completion through virtuous living. One could paraphrase Maurras in this way:

“The dignity of man” (Maurras here says liberty) “is not at the beginning, but at the end. It is not at the root, but in the flowers and fruits of human nature, or better yet, in the virtue of man. One is more dignified (Maurras says freer) in proportion to how much better one becomes.”
(From “Au Signe de Flore”)

Nova et vetera, said Our Lord:

“Every scribe who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”
(Matthew 13:52)

Thus it is with politics, which, while maintaining sound principles in accordance with the natural order, must also know how to adapt to historical, geographical, and other circumstances in order to preserve the identity of its nation.

May this book, published on the 90th anniversary of the Lateran Accords (February 11, 1929), open the eyes of many Catholics and motivate them toward political and practical effectiveness, so as to make them forget the weak and cowardly generation of Catholics who live in their spiritual selfishness—comfortable, yet Pharisaic.

Thomas A.
Priest

INTRODUCTION

Our aim is certainly not to make Saint Thomas a fascist. First, because that would be pure anachronism. Secondly, because we have far too much respect for the Angelic Doctor to make him say what he did not say; we leave such distortions to specialists in intellectual deceit.

Nor is it our aim to make Benito Mussolini, nor even Giovanni Gentile himself — the official philosopher of fascism and author of the first part of *The Doctrine of Fascism* of Mussolini — fervent Thomists. This too would be somewhat dishonest: neither the Duce nor his philosopher had any specifically Thomist formation, and it is hard to see how individuals who have not studied a thinker could draw inspiration from him.

On the other hand, we believe that the doctrine of fascism is in conformity with, or at least potentially in conformity with, the teachings of the Common Doctor, and more generally with the philosophy of realist political thought; with that political philosophy founded by Aristotle, developed by Saint Thomas, and further elaborated in the 20th century by Thomists faithful to the spirit of the Master, such as Abbé Julio Meinvielle, Charles De Koninck, or Father Louis Lachance.

Authority of the Leader, organic unity of the Whole, corporative economy, primacy of the common good over particular goods, use of force when necessary — that is to say, necessary for the preservation or advancement of the common good — preeminent

role of the State: these are all elements that are found both in the political philosophy of integral Thomism and in the doctrine of fascism, and which therefore lead us to believe that it is possible — in all honesty — to be both Thomist and fascist.

May the present work, which consists of nothing other than a free commentary on *The Doctrine of Fascism* by Mussolini in light of the principles of realist political philosophy, demonstrate the soundness of this position.

Chapter One

Fundamental Ideas

(Giovanni Gentile)

1. Fascism as Philosophy

Like any sound political conception, Fascism associates thought with action. It is an action animated by a doctrine.

This doctrine was born from a particular system of historical forces, to which it remains intimately tied and from which it draws its inner impulse.

It thus has a form that corresponds to the contingencies of time and place, but at the same time it contains an ideal content that elevates it to the level of a higher truth in the history of thought.

One cannot act spiritually upon the world as a human will dominating other wills, without having a conception of the transient and particular reality upon which one must act, and of that other permanent and universal reality to which the former is related in its being and in its life.

To know men, one must know reality and its laws.

There is no conception of the State that is not, at its core, a conception of life.

It is a philosophy or an intuition, a system of ideas that is expressed in a logical or systematic construction, which always—at least virtually—amounts to an organic conception of the world.

“Like any sound political conception, Fascism associates thought with action. It is an action animated by a doctrine.”

All politics is a metaphysics in action. Action follows thought. For every act of free will proceeds from intelligence. Even the least

philosophical of political men acts with a philosophy in mind—if not a specific speculative philosophy, then at least a practical philosophy, an ethics, a philosophy of life, which itself corresponds to a certain vision of the world. Thus, Fascism, considered as a political realization, is “animated” by a doctrine; animated, meaning both brought into existence and governed toward an end, just as the soul gives life to the body and directs it in its actions. Here we see that Fascism is not skeptical, but on the contrary, intellectualist.



“This doctrine was born from a particular system of historical forces, to which it remains intimately tied and from which it draws its inner impulse. It thus has a form that corresponds to the contingencies of time and place, but at the same time it contains an ideal content that elevates it to the level of a higher truth in the history of thought.”

Fascism, although it is above all a doctrine — thus possessing something timeless — became incarnate in time, in history, as a concrete realization; it became incarnate by accident (*quod accidit*: what happens) in the 20th century, because all the circumstantial conditions were then present for it to become incarnate.

And it was further incarnated in a given country, Italy, and then in another, Germany — although National Socialism was a very particular form of fascism — because these two countries were, historically, those that offered the best conditions for its genesis.

Fascism indeed has a vocation to adapt to the circumstances of time and place, to the eras and countries, for, like any sound political conception, it takes into account the contingent reality. Fascism is not an ideology; on the contrary — in this sense — it is pragmatic.

“We must not demand ‘the same certainty in all things,’” says Aristotle.

Therefore, in contingent matters, such as natural achievements or human activities, a certainty sufficient to attain the truth in most cases is enough, despite some possible exceptions (Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 96, 1).

In Aristotelian terms, we would say that Fascism is a universal form of State, or of political regime, called to be individuated by the different national materials, and according to given historical circumstances.

And yet, it remains no less, fundamentally, a system, a doctrine, in that it integrates everything that, in political matters, pertains to necessity — that is, everything that cannot not be, and which is therefore true always and everywhere; it contains “an ideal content that elevates it to the level of a higher truth in the history of thought.”

Thus, Fascism, though pragmatic, remains no less intellectualist.

Not skeptical, nor ideological, but intellectualist and pragmatic: Fascism is, quite simply, **realist**. Now, this is precisely the position constantly maintained by the Angelic Doctor.



“One cannot act spiritually upon the world, as a human will dominating other wills, without a conception of the transient and particular reality upon which one must act, and of that other permanent and universal reality from which the former draws its being and its life. To know men, one must know man; one must know reality and its laws.”

The governance of political affairs consists, concretely, in governing men, free wills.

And such governance must be done with intelligence, that is, with knowledge of the matter.

It must therefore take into account both “the transient and particular reality,” that is, the concrete circumstances of time and place with which it must reckon in order to act; and “the permanent and universal reality,” that is, the principles (or laws) of reality, as well as the essences (or natures) of things.

Fascism believes in particular in the existence of a human nature, to which every man has the duty to conform; and it seeks to know this nature, since political government acts upon men, and to act upon something, one must know its essence: “To know men, one must know man.”

Fascism, far from wanting to “create a new man,” as has often been said — wrongly — wants, on the contrary, men to conform their actions, both individually and collectively, to the Idea of Man (or *ratio aeterna humani* in scholastic terms) which imposes itself on them, that is, to human nature as it is apprehended by intelligence.

And the ideal to which fascism aspires is nothing other than this Idea, in the sense that men must strive toward it in their lives.

Thus we see, once again, the fundamental realism of fascism.



“There is no conception of the State that is not, at its core, a conception of life. It is a philosophy or an intuition, a system of ideas that is expressed in a logical construction or summed up in a

vision or doctrine, but it is always, at least virtually, an organic conception of the world.”

There is no conception of the State, that is to say of **political philosophy**, which is not, at its core, a conception of life in general and of human life in particular, that is to say a **psychology** (in the classical sense of the term: logos, the science; psyche, the principle of life, the soul) or an **anthropology**.

Fascism is thus indeed a “system of ideas”; but this system is not based on a priori principles; it is, on the contrary, based on attentive observation of human life, its nature, its laws, its modes of being and acting.

Fascism wants collective life to correspond to individual life, for the human soul to be, so to speak, the paradigm of the City. For example, the soul is tripartite, so there is also a “tripartition” in the political order (cf. Cicero, *The Republic*). The individual soul includes reason, the irascible, and the concupiscible (Saint Thomas, *Supp.*, 96, 10); similarly, the City normally comprises three orders: the order of those who contemplate (scientists, philosophers, priests), the order of those who act (rulers, magistrates, warriors), and the order of those who produce (peasants, workers, and more generally all those who work with matter).

Fascism does not seek to “create” a utopian City—as the socialists would want—but rather **to refound a City in conformity with human nature, with reality**.

2. Spiritualist Conception

*“One would not understand fascism in many of its practical manifestations — whether as a party organization, as an educational system, or as a discipline — if one did not consider it in light of its general conception of life. **This conception is spiritualist. For fascism, the world is not the material world that appears on the surface, where man is an individual isolated from all others, existing in himself and governed by a natural law which, instinctively, pushes him to live a life of selfish and momentary pleasure. In what is called man, fascism considers the nation and the fatherland, individuals and generations united, within the same tradition and the same mission, by a moral law that suppresses the instinct of life kept within the narrow circle of pleasure, in order to establish in duty a higher life, freed from the limits of time and space: a life where the individual, through self-denial, through the sacrifice of his personal interests, through death itself, realizes this entirely spiritual existence which gives him his human worth.**”*

“This conception [of life] is spiritualist.”

This is what risks bothering our good conservatives, who put fascism and communism back to back by claiming that these two movements are basically just two faces of materialism.

No, fascism was not materialist, but on the contrary spiritualist.

Fascism was, so to speak, intuition itself, at a time when most doctrines equated happiness with a bodily or material well-being, whereas the entelechy of human life was on the contrary the domination of the spirit over the body and matter, in the surpassing of oneself, in the service of an ideal, and even in death.



“For fascism, the world is not this material world that appears on the surface, where man is an individual isolated from all others, existing in himself and governed by a natural law which, instinctively, drives him to live a life of selfish and momentary pleasure.”

This does not mean that fascism denies matter; it simply does not consider it as the essence of reality; it implicitly recognizes — at the very least — the existence of forms in general, and of spiritual forms in particular.

Thus, for the fascist, man is not reduced to an animal, that is, to a purely material individual, without relation to others, and destined for a life of pleasure.



But man, from a fascist perspective, is on the contrary a fundamentally spiritual being, made to enter into relation with beings who share the same nature, and in particular with those who are part of the same political community, in friendship, selflessness, and self-giving.

*“In what is called man, fascism considers the nation and **the fatherland**, individuals and generations finding themselves united, in the same **tradition** and in the same **mission**, by a moral law which suppresses the instinct for life confined to the narrow circle of pleasure, to establish in duty a higher life, freed from the limits of time and space: a superior life, where the individual, through selflessness, through the sacrifice of his own particular interests, even through death itself, realizes this entirely **spiritual existence** which gives him his human worth.”*

Some somewhat finicky people might object that there is no explicit mention here of the spiritual soul of man, of his spirit.

To which we will respond that it is impossible to speak of “tradition”, of “mission”, of “moral law”, of “duty”, of “selflessness”, of “sacrifice”, of “entirely spiritual existence”, and even of “fatherland” — the fatherland being above all an idea — if one does not consider man as a spiritual being, that is, possessing a spirit; for none of these things could apply to a purely material being, to an animal.



*“A life where the individual, through selflessness, through the sacrifice of his own personal interests, **through death itself, realizes this entirely spiritual existence which gives him his human worth.**”*

Gentile affirms here that man realizes his spiritual nature through death. That is what is interesting.

Death, in the human being, is the separation of body and spirit. So death is not something natural, since the body is material, and it is in the nature of all material substance to deteriorate. Thus, since man is naturally called to die; and since nature does nothing in vain,

we must say that death can only be a good and desirable thing: through death, man realizes his spiritual nature, attaining an entelechy of the spirit — which, as immaterial, is naturally incorruptible.

Some will object that the corruption of the body is a consequence of original sin, and that it is not part of nature, since Saint Paul writes: “Through sin, death entered into the world” (Romans, 5, 2).

But it must be answered with Saint Thomas, that it is only a consequence per accidens (like malice), but not per se; that is to say, that death is not evil in itself and that it is not death that is the punishment of sin, but the state in which it leaves man: that of a man deprived of immortality. In other words, man would have died even in the state of innocence, but in a better way, and the Angelic Doctor says the following about the state of innocence of the first man: “His body was not subject to dissolution through a force of immortality existing in him; it is the soul which possessed a supernatural force, given by God, by which it could preserve the body from any corruption... [...] This force which the soul had to preserve the body from corruption was not natural; it was a gift of grace” (Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 97, 1).

Others will object again that the separated state of soul and body is imperfect, and that the soul united to a body is a desirable good, since man is “a being composed of matter and form” (*ibid.*, I, 76, 1).

But in truth, this objection must be rejected. In fact, “a natural reality attains its end only through its form” (*ibid.*, I–II, 18, 2); and the form or nature of man is his spirit; and the form, or nature, of man is essentially spiritual. But the end of a thing is what corresponds to its nature, and this end is attained through its entelechy, that is to say, the form which realizes its essence fully, perfectly, that is to say: when the intellect (which is the highest part of the soul) is completely separated from the sensible (the lowest

part), that is to say, when the soul has separated from the body and is placed beside the intellect (ibid., I–II, 4, 5).

“The perfect beatitude of man cannot depend on the body” (ibid., I–II, 4, 5). So that the resurrection of the bodies, in which Catholics believe absolutely and gratuitously, and after which this resurrection the body is united to the spirit in its spiritual state:

“Perfect beatitude, which consists in the vision of God, is the act of a soul without a body, or the act of a soul united to a body that is no longer animal, but spiritual” (ibid., I–II, 4, 7).



If all these things are not said explicitly by Gentile, we cannot think he was unaware of them — certain formulations indicate quite well that he was intuitively aware of them; and it is clear from the way he speaks of death that he explicitly understood it as the realization of the final vocation of man, that is to say, a life where the spirit prevails over death.

We see here that fascism taken as such is in conformity, or at least potentially in conformity, with the Catholic religion.

3. Positive Conception of Life as Struggle

*“Here we have a spiritualist conception, born from the general reaction of the present century against the materialist and degenerate positivism of the 19th century. **Such a conception is anti-positivist, but positive: neither skeptical, nor agnostic, nor pessimistic, nor passively optimistic (as are generally the doctrines — all negative — that place the center of life outside of man who, by his free will, can and must create his world).**”*

Fascism wants man to be active and engaged in action with all his energies.

Manfully aware of real difficulties and ready to face them, it conceives of life as a struggle, and holds that it is up to man to conquer a life truly worthy of him by creating, above all in himself, the instrument (physical, moral, intellectual) to build it. This is true for the individual himself, for the nation, and for humanity.

Hence, the high value of culture in all its forms (art, religion, science) and the very great importance of education. Hence also, the essential value of work, through which man triumphs over nature and creates the human world (economic, political, moral, intellectual).”

“Such a conception is anti-positivist, but positive: neither skeptical, nor agnostic, nor pessimistic, nor passively optimistic, as are generally the doctrines (all negative) that place the center of life outside of man who, by his free will, can and must create his world.”

We see that fascism is a healthy reaction to all the degenerate doctrines of the 19th century.

Fascism reaffirms the true nature of man, who is reason — that is, intelligence and will — and it reaffirms that intelligence is capable of knowing reality, and that the will is truly free, so that man is called to govern his life.

To create his world, that is to say to create a human world, through work on matter, transforming it into something useful for the good of man. Matter, in a fascist perspective, must therefore be “spiritualized” in order to conform to the spiritual nature of man.



“Vividly aware of real difficulties and ready to face them, [fascism] conceives of life as a struggle.”

Since the good or happiness and the elevation of man consist by nature in the state of the soul separated from the body, earthly life is a trial, a series of trials to be overcome in order to attain the rest of the soul. Thus, fascism considers life as a struggle, as does Christian teaching.

And this conforms to the teaching of the Bible: “The life of man upon earth is a warfare” (Job 7:1).

In fascism, animal life is already a struggle, where the law of the jungle reigns.

“Some say that the animals which are now fierce and kill other animals with their teeth and claws were once [in the state of nature] peaceful, and lived with man and other animals. But this is not a matter of faith. **In fact, the nature of animals has not been changed by the sin of man in the manner that human nature has been.** The lion is now what he was in the beginning, eating other animals with his fangs and claws, just as he does now. [...] **By their nature, some animals are enemies of others.**” (Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 96, 1)

Now, since man is an animal, this struggle naturally exists among men as it does among animals, both on the individual scale (confrontations) and on the collective scale (wars).

However, since man is a rational animal, it must be conceded that the struggle among men has a vocation to be rational.

Moreover, properly human life includes a second struggle, even greater than the first, which is the struggle against oneself — that is, against one’s passions and instinctive desires.

“Reason commands the irascible and the concupiscible by a political power [and not a despotic one], for the sensitive appetite is a proper power governed by reason. The sensitive appetite, indeed, can resist and oppose the impulse of reason, as is manifest in the case of continence. This does not occur in animals, which are moved only by the imagination and the senses. We know from experience that we are sometimes inclined or concupiscent against reason, when we feel or imagine something pleasant that reason forbids” (ibid., I-I, 81, 3).

Thus, it is natural — and not sinful — for the lower appetites to resist reason; but it is proper to the superior man to submit the lower appetites to the higher ones; and thereby, in this submission, consists human virtue. Those who allow themselves to be ruled by

the lower appetites rather than ruling them with reason belong to the inferior kind; **while those in whom the soul suffers difficulties and combats to avoid certain evils are the rational kind.** (ibid., I-II, 23, 1)

Now, the virtue of fortitude is precisely the virtue that allows for this struggle. This is why fascism makes this virtue the foundation of human excellence. And in this, it joins — even if it does not know it — the teaching of the Saint Doctor:

“Fortitude, considered as a certain firmness of soul, is required in general for the condition of any virtue.” (ibid., II-II, 123, 2)

And elsewhere: “Fortitude is not only a virtue in itself, but it also maintains the condition necessary for every virtue, namely, the firmness to do good” — **and it is for this reason that it is called a cardinal virtue** (ibid., II-II, 123, 11).

Saint Ambrose even goes so far as to say that:

“Fortitude carries with it all the other virtues, insofar as it is the one most necessary in life, which is naturally made up of trials and dangers, whether on the domestic level or the civic level.” (ibid., II-II, 123, 12)

We remind those Catholics who might forget it that Christ Himself said:

“The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12): the kingdom belongs to the strong, and it is the violent who win it.

It seems that the fascist conception of life is not as opposed to Christian morality as is often claimed.



“[Fascism] believes it belongs to man to conquer a life truly worthy of him.”

Here is a conception of dignity that corresponds, once again, with that of Saint Thomas. For him, **true dignity is moral dignity**, that is to say, man’s dignity (in his rectitude of intention) or virtue. It is something not innate, but acquired, through the repetition of virtuous acts. Thus, man must conquer his dignity.

Man who gives in to his passions, says Saint Thomas, falls below his ontological dignity, and becomes **inferior to the animal** — and this is the reason why he can be removed if the common good requires it.

“By sin man deviates from the order prescribed by reason; and because of that he falls short of human dignity, which consists in being free and existing for oneself; he thus falls into the slavery proper to animals, in such a way that one can dispose of him as one does with animals (...). Hence, the sinner is bad in himself and becomes a man only in appearance, but a good man is one who is able to place himself before a good that the common good demands”
(Summa Theologica, II-II, 64, 2).

We are clearly far from the modern — and modernist — conception of human dignity.



“From the high value of culture in all its forms (art, religion, science) and the very great importance of education... derives,

equally, the essential value of work, through which man triumphs over nature and creates the human world (economic, political, moral, intellectual)."

Culture, education, and work are **all victories of man over nature.**

Culture is the victory of man over the nature that surrounds him.
Education is the victory of man over his own nature.

Work, finally, is both a victory over external nature and over inner nature: through work, man transforms raw material into humanized matter and also works on himself.

For this reason, **work is something natural to man:**

"The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Paradise, to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15).

It is therefore in the essence of man to work.

And it is also **because of the excellence of work**, and not its punishment — it is necessary to insist on this — that man continues to work in Paradise even after the creation of woman and the institution of procreation — since it is only **after sin** that God says to man:

"You will eat your bread by the sweat of your brow" (Genesis 3:19);
Saint Thomas clearly explains it:

"This work [in earthly paradise] would not have been painful but delightful; it would have been joyful, because of the experience man would have had of his natural strength"

(Summa Theologica, I, 102, 3).

But it is also very clear: **the pain of work** — just like the pain related to childbirth — is a consequence of original sin, but a consequence **per accidens**.

Before the sin, man enjoyed working because he received from it a free gift from God and not something that was a burden of his nature. In other words, **pain does not naturally accompany work**, but only accompanies **our fallen, sinful nature**.

“The immortality [of the first man], the absence of suffering, and the primitive state of integrity did not depend on the material conditions, but on a special divine gift” (ibid., I, 81, 5).

And it is thanks to work that **man is created in the image of God**, a unique being made in the image of the Trinity — **soul, body, intelligence, and will** — and destined for immortality.

But above all, it **is through work that man rises above the ease and laziness of fallen nature**. It is through work that **he conquers his moral dignity**. For **perfection consists in acting**.

“It is through work that form proves victorious over matter — form is for matter, not matter for form: the reverse would be monstrous (ibid., I, 89, 1) — and it is the rational spirit that triumphs over brute matter.

4. Moral Conception

“This positive conception of life is obviously an ethical conception. It encompasses all of reality, even human activity, which it dominates. No action escapes moral judgment; nothing can be considered to have value if it is outside moral ends. Life, therefore, involves a struggle, and fascism conceives it as such: serious, austere, religious; it is entirely lived in a world sustained by moral forces and responsibilities of the spirit. Fascism scorns comfortable living.”

“This positive conception of life is obviously an ethical conception.”

Fascism has often been reproached with a certain Machiavellianism, an absence of morality in political matters, a tendency to justify everything — including the worst crimes — in the name of supposed ends.

Yet, the authentically fascist conception of life in general, and of the State in particular, is entirely opposed to such a view. **For this conception is profoundly moral.**

Indeed, fascist regimes (Italian, German, Portuguese — to a certain extent) are the only ones, in recent years, to have attempted to restore honor to morality — a morality rejected both by liberal democracies and communist regimes. **One might think in particular of their political defense of the traditional family, and their fight against homosexuality or prostitution.**



“[Morality] encompasses all of reality, even human activity, which it dominates. No action escapes moral judgment; nothing can be considered to have value if it is outside moral ends.”

If morality encompasses all of reality, and therefore no human action can escape moral judgment, then political action itself cannot be emancipated from moral laws. **This is why Gentile conceived the fascist State as a moral reality (and not a legal one).**

The fascist perspective, **thinking that the State is above mere legal norms (1, 2), affirms that the State is the head of the State:** it is not bound by a law external to itself, **but must make citizens virtuous, and must itself be virtuous.**

And here, we may agree with a classic philosophical notion — repeated by all classical thinkers — that:

“It is evident that the end of a multitude gathered in society is to live virtuously; indeed, men do not come together just to live, because even animals share that much; but to live well — **and that is to live according to virtue; so, the end of a human society is life according to virtue**” (De Regno, I, 1); and elsewhere:

“The City is a community of the good life, composed of diverse communities and aimed at a perfect life, which is self-sufficient. [...] One attains happiness through virtue: so acting virtuously according to the law is the most noble life. It is therefore manifest that the political community consists in a communication of just acts according to laws, and not just in sharing material things. **It is clear that the end for which the City must be ordered and constituted is the good life lived according to virtue.**”

(Comm. pol., III, 17, 411–412).

But, the end or the common good of a society must be received beforehand by the authority that governs that society:

“To govern consists in prudently directing and ordering the people toward the end imposed upon them” (De Regno, II, 3). Now, in the City, this imposed end **is virtue**, and the State must therefore organize itself and act accordingly **toward the attainment of the common good.**

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the State to make citizens virtuous, by all necessary means.

This is why, in the fascist doctrine, the State is not merely the guarantor of individual freedom, as in the liberal conception — and even less a kind of mechanistic or non-organic representation of society — **but is above all the guarantor of the unity of the City in the truth of virtue.**

And this is where the **fascist State is truly totalitarian**, since it considers that, **besides the education of children — or at least as a significant part of it — the responsibility returns to it.**



“Nothing in the world can be deprived of value except in relation to moral ends.”

We see here that the moral duty of which fascism claims to be the promoter is not an abstract duty, detached from all sufficient reason — as found in Kant — but rather one that is conditioned **by moral ends**, that is, the ends of human life. What is good is what allows man to attain his **entelechy**, that is, the perfect realization of his nature or form; what is bad is what, on the contrary, prevents him from reaching that end.

This also shows the alignment of fascist doctrine with **the realist finalism** of Aristotle and Saint Thomas.



“Life, therefore, as fascism conceives it, is a serious, austere, religious struggle: it is lived entirely in a world supported by the moral forces and responsibilities of the spirit. Fascism scorns comfortable living.”

Fascism wants man to live virtuously. But virtue is nothing other than to act according to nature; and man’s nature is his reason. Therefore, the virtue of man consists in acting according to his reason:

“To act according to reason — that is what it means to act virtuously.”

(Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, II-I, 85, 2).

This is why fascism wants life to be lived in a rational, serious, and austere manner.

And this is also why it rejects a comfortable life, or a life according to pleasure, which reduces man to a brute, an animal without reason:

“If it were within the power of pleasures to make men happy, there would be no reason not to call the beasts themselves happy — which would be absurd.”

(Boethius, cited by Saint Thomas in Summa Theologica, II-I, 2, 6).

Fascism **despises the pleasures of the flesh.**

5. Religious Conception

“The Fascist conception of life is a religious one, in which man is viewed in his immanent relation to a higher law, endowed with an objective will transcending the individual and raising him to conscious membership of a spiritual society. “Those who perceive nothing beyond opportunistic considerations in the religious policy of the Fascist regime fail to realize that Fascism is not only a system of government but also and above all a system of thought.”

We will limit ourselves here to two observations.

By “higher law,” it seems clear that Gentile means **natural law** — in the Thomistic sense of the term, that is, in the sense of moral law — even divine law; in any case, this law is certainly not the positive law of man, since Gentile states clearly that it is “**superior**” to them. And this is confirmed by the expression “**objective will**,” which can only refer to God, Author of Nature, and thus of natural law (let us recall, Gentile was Catholic).

Furthermore, he contradicts here all those who view religion as merely an opportunistic or accidental element of the fascist regime; on the contrary, in a fascist perspective, **politics is in itself inseparable from true religion — that is, from the one that truly links man to the higher order and to the objective will from which they derive their existence — therefore, to Catholicism.**

Indeed, from a fascist perspective, the political and religious domains, while distinct, are nevertheless intrinsically and necessarily connected; for the political order is by nature or by itself ordered to the transcendent life of man — that is, to the life of the human spirit after death.

And here we see, once again, how this is in full accordance with the teaching of Saint Thomas:

“Since man, by living according to virtue, is ordered toward a further end, which consists [...] in the vision of God, and since the end of the multitude of men is the same as that of the individual man, **it follows that the ultimate end of the political society is not [only] to live according to virtue but to attain, by this virtuous life, the vision of God.**”

(De Regno, II, 3)

We see, once again, how the spiritualist conception of fascism readily aligns with Thomism, and more generally with the realist and Catholic vision of man in the City.

6. Ethical and Realist Conception

“In the Fascist conception of history, man is man only by virtue of the spiritual process to which he contributes as a member of the family, the social group, the nation, and in function of history to which all nations bring their contribution. Hence the great value of tradition in records, in language, in customs, in the rules of social life. Outside history man is a nonentity. Fascism is therefore opposed to all individualistic abstractions based on eighteenth century materialism; and it is opposed to all Jacobinistic utopias and innovations. It does not believe in the possibility of “happiness” on earth as conceived by the economistic literature of the 18th century, and it therefore rejects the theological notion that at some future time the human family will secure a final settlement of all its difficulties. This notion runs counter to experience which teaches that life is in continual flux and in process of evolution. In politics Fascism aims at realism; in practice it desires to deal only with those problems which are the spontaneous product of historic conditions and which find or suggest their own solutions. Only by entering in to the process of reality and taking possession of the forces at work within it, can man act on man and on nature.”

“Man is man only by virtue of the spiritual process to which he contributes as a member of the family, the social group, the nation, and in function of history to which all nations bring their

contribution. Hence the great L 2 value of tradition in records, in language, in customs, in the rules of social life ... Fascism is therefore opposed to all individualistic abstractions”

It has often been said that fascism seeks to “create a new man,” a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, freed from all bonds and all roots. This is entirely false. Fascism does not believe in the possibility of such a man, for it is realist, and knows that man cannot invent himself. The man that fascism defends is the man integrated into the family and social group, into the nation, and into the history to which all nations contribute.

Within the family and social group: For fascism, the proximate material cause of the City is not the totality of isolated individuals, but the totality of families and intermediate bodies that compose it. The individual as such relates to the City only through the family, which is the first social body.

This is entirely in accord with the teaching of Saint Thomas:

“It is proper for man to live in society, for, being solitary, his existence would not suffice for itself [...]. A family, confined to a single domain, to a certain number of needs concerning vital sustenance — namely that which concerns the acts of nourishment, the safeguarding of life, and the functions necessary to it — would not suffice for itself through a single form of work.” (De Regno, I, 1)

And it is even more evident that the social belonging of man does not end with belonging to a family and a social milieu. It extends to belonging to a political community, to a nation: “Man is only what he is within the nation and in history, to which all nations contribute.” (Marcel De Corte, *Les Droits de l’homme*). Outside of it, the individual does not exist.

Once again, this accords with the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, for whom the only perfect community is the City:

“The City, which is the only perfect community, suffices for itself with respect to all the needs of life, and even more so the province (or union of several Cities), because it alone can provide aid in time of necessity, especially against the resistance of enemies” (Saint Thomas, De Regno, I, 1).

The City is the only perfect community, not only because it alone can fulfill all the needs of life, but also because it alone can provide man with the good life — that is, a properly human life, one lived according to reason and virtue. It is for this reason that there does not and cannot exist an ‘individual’ outside of it who does not belong to it.

This natural belonging to a family, to a social milieu, to a nation, gives man his roots. Roots which, because they are natural and not artificial, are indispensable to life. The uprooted man is a slave; he desires a master and accepts servitude. **Fascism esteems the defender of tradition — in memories, in customs, in law, in the rules of social life — and esteems tradition because it is tradition that preserves reality, and because it is tradition that gives the moral strength of the nation.**



*“it (Fascism) is opposed to all Jacobinistic utopias and innovations. **It does not believe in the possibility of “happiness” on earth ... and it therefore rejects the theological notion that at some future time the human family will secure a final settlement of all its difficulties**”*

Fascism has often been reproached for being a utopia, worthy of the

madness of the French Revolution and of communism, which sought to bring happiness to earth. Yet here again, this accusation is entirely unfounded. Beyond the fact that the spirit of fascism is profoundly different from that of the revolutionary spirit, it has never sought to establish a paradise on earth. It rejects the very possibility of “happiness” on earth. In the spirit of fascism, genuine happiness is only possible beyond death.

Indeed, a thing receives its essence from its form; and the form of man is his spirit; thus the essence of man is spiritual. But man does not reach his finality so long as he does not perfectly realize his own essence; consequently, man reaches his finality only when an act of the intellect — the beatitude — is perfected:

“Beatitude is the perfection of man on the side of the intellect” (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, I-II, 4, 5).

“Moreover, it is clear that the act of the intellect is all the more perfect in man when it consists in knowing through intelligible realities rather than through images” (ibid., I, 89, 1); this is possible only in the post-mortem state of pure spirit, that is to say, of a spirit separated from the body, at which point man attains his true happiness.

Fascism is thus inherently spiritualist.

This is why fascism does not believe in terrestrial happiness, and rejects “all teleological conceptions according to which, at a certain point in history, the human race will reach a definitive stage of organization.”

At most, the only Paradise that fascism is willing to accept is **“a laborious, disciplined, uncompromising Paradise; a Paradise in which one never rests, and which has, at its gates, angels armed with swords”** (José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Textos de doctrina política).



*“This notion runs counter to experience which teaches that life is in continual flux and in process of evolution. **In politics Fascism aims at realism**”*

In the spirit of fascism — which is radically that of Thomism — life is a continual movement, to the point that what is no longer in movement is nothing but death (Summa Theologica, I, 18, 2). Furthermore, the earthly existence of man is a trial, a struggle; life is made for the exercise of virtues. **Fascism does not believe in rest on earth. Rest exists only for the separated soul.**

On earth, fascism wants man to be “active and engaged in action with all his energies” (The Doctrine of Fascism, I, 3, Conception of life as a struggle). For it is certain, according to fascist doctrine, that difficulty is inherently linked to merit, that misfortune can only be overcome by suffering supported with courage, and that struggle is the supreme test, the crucible in which the human spirit is tempered, elevated, and purified.

In this sense, fascism is profoundly realist.

7. Anti Individualism and Liberty

“Anti-individualistic, the Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State, which stands for the conscience and the universal, will of man as a historic entity. It is opposed to classical liberalism which arose as a reaction to absolutism and exhausted its historical function when the State became the expression of the conscience and will of the people. Liberalism denied the State in the name of the individual; Fascism reasserts The rights of the State as expressing the real essence of the individual. And if liberty is to be the attribute of living men and not of abstract dummies invented by individualistic liberalism, then Fascism stands for liberty, and for the only liberty worth having, the liberty of the State and of the individual within the State. The Fascist conception of the State is all embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism, is totalitarian, and the Fascist State — a synthesis and a unit inclusive of all values — interprets, develops, and potentates the whole life of a people.”

“Anti-individualistic, the Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State, which stands for the conscience and the universal, will of man as a historic entity.”

Fascism is anti-individualist, which means that it refuses to place the individual above the State. But it is also — and here lies its

originality compared to absolutism — a communal political conception: it is, on this earth, the only political form in which the community is capable of perfectly fulfilling itself according to virtue. (saint Thomas, De Regno, I, 1) Consequently, he wants that the individual be ordered whole to the state as the imperfect is ordered to the perfect. And this is why the fascist State is well in conformity with the teaching of Saint Thomas:

“The whole man is ordered as to his end to the whole community of which he is a part” (Summa Theologica, II-II, 65).

Since man — who is “by nature a political animal” (Aristotle, Politics, I) — is naturally part of a State, and since the part is ordered to the whole of which it is a part, fascism sees the State as the true form of human society to which all individuals are ordered:

“Statism is this political conception in which man is rightly ordered to the State as the part is to the whole” (Abbé Julio Meinvielle, Conception catholique de la politique). It is not the individual who is real, but the individual — as we shall see later — who exists through the State.

And since the individuals who compose the State are by nature political, the State is thus the guardian of the conscience and will of these individuals, who find in it their own immanent objective.



“Liberalism denied the State in the name of the individual; Fascism reasserts The rights of the State as expressing the real essence of the individual.”

For the fascist, the individual exists only through and in the State. He exists only through the State, insofar as his nature is one of political and social existence, so that a man cannot be led to the existence of a perfect political community (not of an individual without family, and not without City).

But above all, he exists only in the State, since a truly human activity — that is, one that consists in contemplating, acting, and doing — can only be realized in the context of the political community. The individual is a being whom one must first instruct in the sciences and arts necessary to a good life, and whom one must educate in virtue, and then give the opportunity to transmit his knowledge (for knowledge must be able to be communicated), and to give him the means to practice virtue — especially the virtue of justice, which concerns men in so far as they are in relation to one another — as well as the art to which he may eventually specialize.

“The human person has no actual existence outside of the plan of human life, taken as a whole” (Marcel De Corte, *Les Droits de l’homme*).

The individual is nothing — currently — without the State; it is to say that he cannot act except in the State, and therefore that his true reality consists in the State; the State is the true reality of the individual.



“Fascism stands for liberty, and for the only liberty worth having, the liberty of the State and of the individual within the State.”

Liberty is not an absolute, an end in itself; it does not consist in doing everything we want, or everything we desire, but in orienting ourselves toward our finality as a political animal, which is none other than the Common Good.

Indeed, one does not choose one's end, for it is imposed on us by our nature. Thus, the true dignity of the being endowed with free will consists not in choosing an end for oneself, but in choosing the right means that will allow one to reach that end. And man is a political animal, so that his end is that of the City, which is the Common Good. It follows from this that true liberty consists in ordering oneself to the Common Good.

But only the State, as State, is capable of bringing men to the Common Good, for the multitude cannot on its own pursue such a good. The only liberty that matters is therefore the liberty of the State, and that — conjointly — of the individual insofar as he is in the State; a liberty conceived outside the State would be purely and simply illusory.

“Human dignity, the integrity of man, and his liberty are eternal and intangible values; but liberty exists only within an order” (José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Textos de doctrina política).

And the State alone can give an order to human liberty, that is, offer it both the means necessary to act — which we have studied — and the finality toward which it must tend, namely the Common Good.



“The Fascist conception of the State is all embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism, is totalitarian”

Everything in the State — that is to say, everything that pertains to man, the political animal, exists in the State; and nothing has value apart from its relation to his existence (and being and existence being transcendental notions) — everything has value only in relation to the State, and that, among human things, those that are most noble are precisely those which relate most directly to the State, or to the political community.

It is for this reason that fascism is “totalitarian.”

And it is totalitarian not in the sense that it would deny the personal vocation of man (as does communism); but in the sense that, in the one and only order it recognizes — that of political order — man and his acts are referred to an end, the Common Good (the only end that can be called such), and in this sense to the State, or to Totality, since the Common Good is the immanent finality of man.

“The whole man is ordered as to his end to the entire community of which he is a part” (Summa Theologica, II-II, 65), and this is why the State is for the Common Good, in the sense that man finds his happiness only upon this earth through the Common Good of Totality. In this way, fascism is therefore entirely in conformity with the natural order, which is essentially political.

“There is a totalitarianism of the Common Good, because the State can command all actions insofar as they are ordered to the Common Good” (Abbé Julio Meinvielle, Conception catholique de la politique); a Common Good which, as Saint Thomas notes, has something of the “divine” about it (Summa Theologica, II-II, 99, 1) insofar as it is, in this world, that which most closely participates in the universality of God.

“The temporal Common Good of all society is divine because it comes from God and leads to God” (Abbé Julio Meinvielle, op. cit.).

Moreover, the supernatural Common Good is, for the political soul as for the saintly soul, perfect happiness. Grace does not suppress nature, but perfects it (*gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit*), so that the supernatural Common Good — for man as for the political community — perfects the natural Common Good.

It has been claimed that the transcendence of happiness, according to Saint Thomas, lies in the fact that this supreme end is purely and simply separate from the common good; but this is a serious error. In reality, Saint Thomas does not in any way separate the two; the universal good common to the entire political community is distinct from inferior goods in that it surpasses private goods. One can thus say, without ambiguity of terms, “particular” and “singular.”

“The proper good of man must be a common good according to reason. For the good that man possesses as a man is the good he has according to reason; from which it follows that the artisan is in his own good when he works well, but that his good as a man is the Common Good of the City” (Saint Thomas, *Quaestiones disputatae*, II, 2).

In the same way, happiness is not the good of man as a singular man, but, in the same way, **“happiness is not the good of man as such... but as a citizen of the City of God”** (Charles De Koninck, *De la primauté du Bien commun contre les personnalistes*).

And the Common Good consists in nothing other than the unity of the City: “the good and salvation of men in society is the preservation of this unity, which brings concord; and without it,

well-being, the very beneficence of social life, disappears: moreover, a disunited society becomes unbearable to its members. This is what must be applied above all by he who leads the human community: to procure unity” (De Regno, I, 2).

A unity of the City which is also called political friendship, since the members of the State or the political community are united in the unity of persons: **“Friendship is the principal solicitude of legislators, even more than justice, for united men are not particularly in need of justice, while the divided, enemies of friendship, have constant need of it”** (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, VIII, 1).

Political friendship, it is true, is by nature something somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, it is the finality of the political community: if citizens do not spontaneously perform acts of friendship among themselves, the State has the duty to compel them to do so. But, on the other hand, friendship must, by definition, be something voluntary and free: one cannot force people to be friends.

However, since political friendship is the natural finality of society, there must necessarily be a means of overcoming this contradiction. And the answer is given to us, once again, by Aristotle: **“The City is a plurality which, by the necessary means of education, must be brought back to a single community”** (Politics, II, 5).

Therefore, for a State, this is not a tyrannical task, but rather a soundly totalitarian one, that is to say, concerned with the greatest good of the members of the City — namely, the Common Good — by placing in charge of education those who are both rationally and reasonably able to order citizens to the Common Good, which is the ultimate end of rational individuals. For it is through the State and only through the State that the individual manages to renounce the

desires that arise from his subjectivity, so as to desire only the Universal, which is what his nature's objective will tends toward.

Political friendship is the immanent end of man, for only friendship makes it possible to actualize all the powers of his nature — intelligence, will, heart — and political friendship is the most perfect of friendships, insofar as it is the one that best actualizes these same powers.

Aristotle says that political friendship, also called concord, is realized in the City “when the citizens are unanimous on their interests, choose the same line of conduct, and carry out all the decisions taken in common” (Nicomachean Ethics, IX, 6). This is what appears to be “totalitarian”!

As for Saint Thomas, he readily takes up Cicero's magnificent definition of political friendship in *The Republic*: **“The agreement of human and divine things, with goodwill (love of the will) and charity (love of the heart).”**

Here we see the beauty of totalitarianism — fascist, of course — which, far from alienating individuals in the unity of the State, instead makes them reach their ultimate end through and within this unity of the State.



“the Fascist State ... interprets, develops, and potentates the whole life of a people.”

The State interprets and develops the life of the people insofar as the State — that is to say here, political authority — is to the

multitude what the soul is to the body (De Regno, I, 1), and it is the soul that gives reality to the body, and which develops its own proper life.

The State, finally, governs the entire life of the people, in the sense that it is a total authority since, for the people, as for the individual, there is no other ultimate end than their own unity — for unity is the ultimate end — and it is unity through and in the State (ibid., I, 2).

If the fascist State governs the entire life of the people in a totalitarian manner, it is for the good of the people, and solely for their good.

8. Antisocialism and Corporatism

“Neither individuals nor groups (political parties, associations, unions, classes) exist outside the State. Fascism opposes socialism, which freezes the historical movement of classes in the class struggle, and ignores the unity of the State, which incorporates classes into a single economic and moral reality; and likewise, it is against class-based syndicalism. But Fascism wants the real demands that gave rise to the socialist and syndicalist movement to be recognized, and it ensures that in the corporative system these interests align with the unity of the State.”

Neither individuals nor groups (political parties, associations, unions, classes) exist outside the State.

Insofar as, by “State,” Mussolini means nothing other than the City itself, this statement signifies nothing other than that all intermediate bodies, whatever they may be, belong to the City, and that their own goods are ordered toward the Common Good of the City.

“It is the Common Good that is best in the order of human society. It is that in which all men meet and by which they form one thing; for it is the unity of friendship, which is unity in the will, the unity of political will. The Common Good of the City is greater and more divine than the goods of individuals, of the family, and of intermediate groups” (Saint Thomas, Comm. pol., I, III, 32-33).

Thus, intermediate bodies can pursue their own goods only insofar as they are ordered toward the Common Good; one might even say that they are goods of the Common Good. The State may protect them, but only insofar as, and especially when, they serve intermediate bodies; the true good of an intermediate body is to cooperate in the Common Good of the Whole.

Now, this Common Good, which the State must ensure, is nothing other than the unity of the social body composed of multiple bodies. Political action, at all levels, consists in working toward the unity of the City, that is, toward political friendship, since the members of the City are persons, and the unity of persons is friendship. Political unity is thus unity of friendship between the bodies that compose it; and this unity is all the stronger when the members have more friendship for one another.

Thus, the ultimate goal of the bodies of trades is to cooperate with the unity of the State.

Some may object that intermediate bodies come before the City, in the same way that members come before the whole. To this, one must reply, following Saint Thomas, that **“the whole is prior in nature and perfection to the part, according to the order of generation and of perfection [...]; the parts are prior in the order of generation, but the whole is prior in the order of perfection”** (Comm. pol., II, III, 38-39); and the perfection of intermediate bodies is to be parts of the City. Chronologically, intermediate bodies are born before the City; but in terms of meaning and value, they are subordinate to the City.

Fascism is corporatist, in that it advocates the state organization of bodies bringing together workers and employers, both within the trade and within the larger framework of the company in which they work, with the general interest guiding the enterprise as much as the State.

It emerges clearly from this that Fascism is radically opposed to Marxism and all its offshoots. Fascism seeks the unity of the State through political friendship, which is the true Common Good, while Marxism, on the contrary, sets classes against one another (“bourgeois” on one side, “proletarians” on the other), thereby sowing discord and the dissolution of political society.

Those who equate Fascism and Marxism have therefore not understood, or else have shown extraordinary bad faith.

“But Fascism wants the real demands that gave rise to the socialist and syndicalist movement to be recognized; and it ensures that in the corporative system these interests align with the unity of the State.”

However, Fascism wants to protect workers, just as they were protected in ancient economic societies that abolish class conflicts by bringing the trade under the protection of the State and ordering it to the Common Good. This adaptation of the Fascist will to the order of the Ancien Régime, while adjusting to contemporary economic circumstances, is noteworthy.

Thus, Fascism is corporatist, meaning that it advocates the state organization of bodies bringing together workers and employers, both within the trade and within the general framework of the company in which they work, with the general interest guiding the enterprise as much as the State. Finally, Fascism intends to ensure both distributive justice, order, and the unity of the State.



If the economic-political organization of society advocated by fascism is in accordance with the traditional — and Thomist — conception of the social order, we can also add that it conforms to the teaching of the Popes, and more generally to the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Here are some excerpts from the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) by Leo XIII, published at the end of the “liberal century”:

“The last century destroyed, without replacing them with anything, the ancient corporations which were a protection for the workers. The religious sentiments of the past have disappeared from public laws and institutions and thus, little by little, **isolated and defenseless workers have found themselves, over time, at the mercy of inhuman masters and the greed of a pitiless competition.**

The socialists, so-called in order to cure this evil, stir up the jealous hatred of the poor against the rich.”

There is nothing more opposed to the truth than such conduct, which the Church has always condemned. By contrast, she teaches that class distinctions are in themselves natural, **that mutual duties bind them together**, and that those duties are so dictated by reason and Christian justice.

Thus, in the case of the worker, who engages himself to serve a master, he is bound by the obligation of fulfilling entirely and faithfully what is agreed, so long as it is not contrary to justice or morality. He must not harm his employer, neither in his property, nor in his person. **Even his claims must be free from violence and must never take on the form of sedition.** He must avoid wicked men who, in deceitful speeches, stir up exaggerated hopes

and make grand promises that end only in vain regrets and the ruin of fortunes.

As for the rich and the employers, they must not treat the worker as a slave; it is just that they respect in him the dignity of man, and still more that of the Christian. Bodily labor, by the common testimony of reason and of Christian philosophy, far from being a subject of shame, does honor to man, since it furnishes him with an honorable means of supporting his life.

But, among the principal duties of the employer, the first is to give to each one the wage that is just.

In the same way, then, by all possible means, the State must render itself useful to other classes, and likewise it can greatly improve the lot of the working class. It does so most rigorously by making it its concern to ward off any reproach of injustice; for in virtue of its office, the State must serve the Common Good. It is evident that the more general advantages resulting from this orderly action will multiply, the less there will be need to resort to other makeshift expedients to remedy the condition of the workers.

Finally, employers and workers themselves can contribute significantly to solving the question by all works aimed at effectively relieving want and **bringing the two classes closer together.** Among these works are all mutual aid societies.

But the first place belongs to workers' corporations which, in themselves, embrace nearly all such works. Our ancestors long enjoyed the beneficial influence of these corporations. They first assured the workers clear advantages. In addition, as monuments proclaim, they were a source of glory and progress for the arts themselves. Today, the more cultivated generations, the more regulated morals, **the more numerous requirements leave no**

doubt that these corporations must be adapted to new needs. Therefore, we wish to see them formed from various professions, either from the members of a single trade, or mixed, bringing together both workers and employers. It is also desirable that they be so organized as to render better and more effective their work.”

The fascist State, by instituting such corporations, does nothing other than conform to the precepts of the Church.

Here now are some excerpts from the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) of Pius XI, published forty years after *Rerum novarum*, as the Italian fascist State saw it:

“As for the role of public powers, Leo XIII boldly went beyond the barriers within which liberalism had contained their intervention; **he did not hesitate to teach that the State is not only the guardian of order and law, but that it must work energetically so that, through the entire body of laws and institutions, ‘the constitution and administration of society will naturally make the well-being of the people flourish’.**

While the principles of liberalism, which paralyzed any effective intervention by public powers, had long been wavering, the encyclical determined in the minds of many an increasingly powerful movement in favor of a frank and vigorous return of the State to the domain of social economy.

Regarding the reform of institutions, it is quite natural that the State devotes all its care to it. We recognize that reforms must be achieved according to the needs and conditions of the time, and that they will only be accomplished by the harmonious blossoming of groups and corporations, under the close and constant collaboration of individuals and the State.

Given the evolution of social conditions, it is now evident that many things which were formerly accomplished by small associations can no longer be done except by large and powerful collectives.

The goal which the State and the elite of the citizens must above all set for themselves, and to which they must apply all their efforts, is to put an end to the conflict dividing the classes and to provoke and encourage cordial collaboration between professions.

‘Social policy must therefore make every effort to reconstitute the corporations.’

Perfect healing will only occur if, for these opposing classes, we substitute well-constituted bodies — “orders” or “professions” — which group men not according to the position they occupy in the labor market, but according to the different branches of social activity to which they belong.

“The resulting order,” as Saint Thomas clearly explains, “from the unity of the various diverse elements harmoniously ordered, **will not be truly ordered unless there is true unity relating to the common good of all the elements which constitute it.**”

A real union will only be found — for each profession, in each of its categories, for all the workers as well as all the employers — in the common good to which they must all contribute by coordinating their efforts.

From this, it is easy to conclude that among professional groupings, primacy unquestionably belongs to the interests common to the profession; **however, the most important thing is to ensure that collective activity always turns toward the Common Good of political society.**

“Recently, as everyone knows, a new kind of trade union organization and cooperative was inaugurated.”

The State grants the trade union legal recognition which does not give it a monopoly as such, since only the recognized union can represent employers and workers before the State, and it alone is authorized to conclude labor contracts or collective bargaining agreements.

Union membership is optional, and it is in this sense that one can say the trade union does not have a monopoly, since payment of dues to other special associations is mandatory only for those who belong to a recognized union. Employers or workers who do not belong are not bound by the collective agreements concluded by the recognized union.

It is true that there is an officially declared monopoly of the recognized union, but this does not exclude the existence of professional associations de facto.

“The corporations are made up of representatives from workers’ and employers’ unions of the same profession or the same trade and, acting as true and proper organs of State institutions, direct and coordinate the activity of the unions in all matters of common interest.

Strikes and lockouts are prohibited; if the parties cannot come to an agreement, it is the authority that intervenes.

It does not take much reflection to see the advantages of the institution, even as briefly as We have described it: peaceful collaboration between classes, elimination of socialist action and organizations, moderating influence of a special magistracy.”

It is quite evident that Pius XI is here alluding to the fascist corporatist system.



We will conclude this chapter with these words taken from The Catholic Conception of the Economy by Abbé Julio Meinvielle:

“Concretely, fascism is the only movement that has restored the traditional principles of political economy.”

These traditional principles are none other than those of Saint Thomas Aquinas and, more generally, of realist political philosophy.

9. Democracy and Nation

“Grouped according to their several interests, individuals form classes; they form trade-unions when organized according to their several economic activities; but first and foremost they form the State, which is no mere matter of numbers, the sum of the individuals forming the majority. Fascism is therefore opposed to that form of democracy which equates a nation to the majority, lowering it to the level of the largest number; but it is the purest form of democracy if the nation be considered as it should be from the point of view of quality rather than quantity, as an idea, the mightiest because the most ethical, the most coherent, the truest, expressing itself in a people as the conscience and will of the few, if not, indeed, of one, and ending to express itself in the conscience and the will of the mass, of the whole group ethnically molded by natural and historical conditions into a nation, advancing, as one conscience and one will, along the self same line of development and spiritual formation. Not a race, nor a geographically defined region, but a people, historically perpetuating itself; a multitude unified by an idea and imbued with the will to live, the will to power, self-consciousness, personality.”

“individuals form classes; they form trade-unions when organized according to their several economic activities”

Fascism has often been accused of wanting to abolish all intermediary bodies between the individual and the State. This accusation proves unfounded, since on the contrary, fascism made itself the defender — doctrinally and historically — of intermediary bodies. It has always admitted that society is composed of multiple

orders, and moreover, advocated and established a corporatist system (I, 8. Anti-socialism and corporatism), such as that which existed under the Ancien Régime and which was encouraged by papal encyclicals (*Rerum novarum*, *Quadragesimo anno*).



“but first and foremost they (the individuals) form the State”

By “State,” it is clear that Mussolini does not mean here the state institution, but the public thing — the City. What he therefore means is that the individuals who compose a people, although they are part of multiple intermediary bodies, nonetheless belong to a single City, and that this belonging comes first in the order of nature (“before all”) and in the order of perfection (“above all”) compared to belonging to other social bodies, including the family.

This is entirely in line with Aristotle’s teaching, as taken up by Saint Thomas, as follows:

“The City is prior by nature and perfection to the family and to the individual. The reason is as follows. The whole is prior to the part, in the order of nature and perfection. [...] For if man, as a substance, is destroyed, the foot no longer remains, nor the hand, except equivocally — in the sense in which one could call a severed hand a ‘hand.’ And this is because when such a part is corrupted, the whole is corrupted. What is corrupted does not preserve its nature, hence it loses its definition. It is therefore clear that the essence, simplified in name, remains in the name alone, which is then attributed equivocally. And that the part is corrupted if the whole is corrupted can be shown by the fact that every part is defined by its operation and by its operative virtue. The foot is defined as the organ of walking. Therefore, because it no

longer fulfills this function, it is no longer the same species; what remains of the foot in a corpse is called ‘foot’ only equivocally. [...] **It is therefore evident that the whole is naturally prior to the parts, even though the parts are prior in the order of generation. For each man belongs to the City as a whole, just as the parts of a man belong to the whole man. For just as the hand or foot cannot exist without man, so the individual cannot by himself subsist apart from the City. [...] From these premises it follows that the City is prior by nature to the individual.**”

(Saint Thomas, Commentary on the Politics, I, II, 38–39)

But if the City is prior to the individual and to the family in the order of nature — in the sense that the individual and the family are only natural parts of it — it is also prior to the intermediary bodies that are part of it.

And insofar as what is first in the order of nature, of being, is also first in the order of perfection (that is, of the good, being and good being transcendentals, the more perfect a thing is, the more good it is), it follows that the City is more perfect than the social bodies that compose it, and that belonging to the City comes “before” — in right — belonging to those social bodies.

Thus, it is in accordance with integral Thomism to declare that individuals, whether grouped into orders or intermediary bodies, belong above all and before all to the State, that is, to the City of which they are members.



“which is no mere matter of numbers, the sums of the individuals forming the majority. Fascism is therefore opposed to that form of democracy which equates a nation to the majority, lowering it to the level of the largest number”

Here again, no statement could be more “realist.”

Indeed, while a whole can be mathematically reduced to the sum of its parts, it is not so ontologically. For the parts are to the whole what matter is to substance, and a substance is made not only of prime matter but also of a substantial form, which gives matter an order and thus a nature — without which a body would be reducible to a heap of members, or — analogously — a house to a pile of bricks, which is absurd. For there truly to be a whole, there must indeed be parts, but also an order among those parts.

Therefore, the City cannot be reduced to the men who compose it, and these men cannot be considered in isolation, as independent entities without relation.

Men are united among themselves, in a City, by a shared history, culture, and destiny; in short, by a love shared by all which unites them (**“love is the force of union,”** Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 60, 4).

A State is not reducible to a collection of individuals. A State is, above all, a nation.



“the people ... as an idea, the mightiest because the most ethical, the most coherent, the truest, expressing itself in a people as the

conscience and will of the few, if not, indeed, of one, and ending to express itself in the conscience and the will of the mass, of the whole group ethnically molded by natural and historical conditions into a nation, advancing, as one conscience and one will, along the self same line of development and spiritual formation. ... but a people, historically perpetuating itself; a multitude unified by an idea and imbued with the will to live, the will to power, self-consciousness, personality.”

Thus, the people, from a fascist perspective, must not be understood as a collection of individuals, but as a unity — that is to say, as the conscience and the will of a multitude united by a history, a culture, and a common destiny; or, to use José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s expression, as a **“unit of destiny in the universe”** and the will to give it life.

Now, if race, or ethnicity, is the material substratum of the nation, culture is its formal constituent.

Culture is the idea: an idea of human nature.

Concretely, it is a set of customs, traditions, and habits which constitute a shared heritage for the individuals of the same people.

“The customs, traditions, and habits of a nation, as well as the institutions in which they are lived, truly constitute a common heritage. Because, first of all, there can be no collaboration, which is the collective force capable of producing birth and progress, without such shared customs. Next, because those customs rest upon the moral order and the law, and because they are the universal and lasting conditions of perfection. They are always, for all, facilities offered to the nation, like an organized service of people, things, and values. Each person, inasmuch as he submits to them, can draw a considerable increase in perfection from them.

Is it necessary to add that it is especially these which are responsible for the particular mode in which the Good is clothed in each nation? Rooted in the soul of the people, they bear witness to the favorable geographic and economic conditions, to a kind of civilization, to moral temper, to intellectual and artistic development, and to the general level of culture. The more one is detached from the matter, the more one rises to the cause of the limitation or individuation of the spirit. Moreover, being instruments, means, they are what comes first in the plan of execution. They are therefore what participates in the greatest measure in the concrete mode of life.”

(Père Louis Lachance, Political Humanism according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, pp. 247–248)

Men gathered in a City are not only united among themselves by similar interests or by the place where they live; they are above all united by a common tradition. **Without this unity, which would be purely material and utilitarian, their communion in a shared heritage would be fragile and eventually nonexistent, and so would the City itself. The City cannot rest upon a mere convergence of material interests.** It must be based, in order to be truly alive, on the cultural unity of the people, on its tradition, its language, and its memory.

The philosopher Thomas Molnar rightly remarked:

“It is by living in a given milieu, and not otherwise, that we are shaped by that very milieu; our identity does not result from the sum of individual choices.” (L’Américanologie, p. 99)

This is why individual happiness evaluated at the collective level — without an idea of the nation — is incomplete; that is to say, an idea of the nation that is organized, endowed with a real political

existence, capable of directing its organic entirety as a true, organized society.

This was, unfortunately, the case of the society of the Ancien Régime, where the absence of collective consciousness and will led to collapse.

10. Conception of the State

*“In so far as it is embodied in a State, this higher personality becomes a nation. **It is not the nation which generates the State**; that is an antiquated naturalistic concept which afforded a basis for 19th century publicity in favor of national governments. **Rather is it the State which creates the nation**, conferring volition and therefore real life on a people made aware of their moral unity. The right to national independence does not arise from any merely literary and idealistic form of self-consciousness; still less from a more or less passive and unconscious de facto situation, but from an active, self-conscious, political will expressing itself in action and ready to prove its rights. It arises, in short, from the existence, at least in fieri, of a State. Indeed, it is the State which, as the expression of a universal ethical will, creates law.”*

“It is not the nation which generates the State”

The nation is analogous to the State, for the political society, as matter is to form in a hylomorphic composite, or as the body is to the soul in an animal; for just as the principle of unity of a composite is the form, and the soul is the principle of unity in an animal, so too the State is the principle of unity in the nation.

Indeed, **since men are numerous and each can provide for his own particular good, their society would disintegrate if there were no principle aimed at the common good of this multitude — just as the body of a man or any animal would dissolve if there were no directive force uniting all members toward the common good.** (Saint Thomas, On Kingship, I, 1) — and the guiding principle or form of a national multitude is precisely what we call the State.

Now, it is evident that it is not matter that causes form, for prime matter, which is pure potentiality, is only capable of being a natural being insofar as it is actualized by form (Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 76, 14, 2); indeed, being and unity are transcendentals — to be is to be one, and what is not one is not being, but multiplicity (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, X); hence a nation that is not unified by a State is not yet a properly defined nation, for it does not even have the existence of a nation.

It is therefore correct to say that “it is not the nation that creates the State.”



“On the contrary, it is the State which creates the nation, conferring volition and therefore real life on a people made aware of their moral unity.”

Since the nation is to the State as matter is to form, and since form is what brings matter’s potential into actuality (*Summa Theologica*, I, 9, 2), it is necessary to affirm that what gives the nation its existence is the State — or, to put it differently, the State is the actualizing principle of the nation’s potentiality, bringing it from an indeterminate state to an effective existence.

Thus, the State does so by incarnating the objective will of the nation, which is the will of the human nature that unites the members of the national whole.



“The right to national independence ... (is founded on) an active, self-conscious, political will expressing itself in action and ready to prove its rights. It arises, in short, from the existence, at least in fieri, of a State.”

Just as the potential or right of a material substance to receive a form is founded on a certain disposition of the matter — a disposition adequate to the desired form — so too must the nation have an active consciousness of itself, that is, a will ready to act, in order to have the right to exist as a political community, that is, as a community of action.

In other words, there must already be a State in potency — or in fieri — within the nation that aspires to exist, so that it already effectively has the right to exist. The fact that a nation is not in the state of prime matter, but already bears the mark of form, is what gives it this sign. It is in fact “matter marked by a quantity, which is the principle of individuation” (Summa Theologica, I, 75, 4); hence it is a certain realization of the nation that founds its right to independence. **While it is true that the State is not created by the nation, we can nonetheless affirm that it is its product in a reduced sense.**



“it is the State which, as the expression of a universal ethical will, creates law.”

The State is the most perfect realization, on the collective scale, of human nature, or, if one prefers, the most complete realization of human nature as a political nature; thus it embodies the objective

will of the persons who compose it — that is, the will of their universal human nature.

Now, the very reason for law — understood as the natural ordering that determines what belongs to each person — is nothing other than human nature.

It follows that it is entirely correct to say that “the State creates law.”

11. An Ethical State

“The nation, as a State, is an ethical reality, which exists and lives insofar as it develops. For it, to stop is to die. The State is therefore not only an authority that governs and gives legal form and a value of spiritual life to individual wills; it is also a power that asserts its will externally, by having it recognized and respected — that is, by demonstrating, through facts, its universality in all the manifestations necessary for its development. From this comes an organization and at least a virtual expansion. The State can thus be likened to the nature of the human will, which knows no limits to its development and proves its infinity by realizing itself.”

“The nation, as a State, is an ethical reality, which exists and lives insofar as it develops. For it, to stop is to die.”

The State, in the doctrine of fascism, is not only an institution; it is also and above all an organic reality, that is to say a reality that lives — at least analogously.

Indeed, life, for Saint Thomas, is the mode of existence of that which moves by itself: “We shall call living all beings that determine themselves to movement or to any kind of action” (Summa Theologica, I, 18, 1). **The living being is therefore the being whose movement is spontaneous in its principle and immanent in its end;** to put it in philosophical terms, it is the being whose operative efficient cause is its formal cause, and whose final cause is its own good.

Now, the State is a moral whole. And a moral whole is a whole composed of reasonable individuals (remote material cause) united in their action by an authority (formal cause as the principle of unity

of persons, efficient cause as the principle of their common action), with a view to a good (final cause). It is therefore a whole which is itself an end, that is to say, whose purpose is nothing other than its own good; and it is also a whole which moves by itself, that is, a being whose principle of movement is intrinsic, since its formal cause, which is the principle, is also its efficient cause. And thus, analogously, a whole which possesses life.

Therefore, the State or the political community, which is a moral whole, “an ethical reality,” is thereby also an organic reality.

But a living being is only alive insofar as it moves by itself: “As soon as a living being has nothing but an external motion, it is dead through lack of life” (Summa Theologica, I, 18, 1). And, “For a living being, to live is to be” (I, 18, 2). Hence an organic reality exists insofar as it is currently organic, that is to say, insofar as it moves by its own forces.

Therefore, it seems quite correct to say that the political community, which is an ethical reality, which is a living reality, “exists insofar as it develops,” and that “for it, to stop is to die.”



*“The State is also a power that asserts its will externally, by having it recognized and respected — that is to say, by demonstrating, through facts, **its universality** in all the manifestations necessary for its development.”*

Because the State or the political community is, as a “perfect community” (Saint Thomas, De Regno, I, 1), the individuation at the collective level of human nature — or, if one prefers, the

individuation of human nature as political nature — it is in the nature of a State to wish to be universal and, consequently, to do everything to universalize itself — at least spiritually, that is to say, culturally.

The aspiration of a State to empire is therefore something natural and good, and a sign of vitality, as we shall have the occasion to see again (II, 13. Empire and discipline).



“The State can thus be likened to the nature of the human will, which knows no limits to its development and proves its infinity by realizing itself.”

Because the State is an individuation of human nature, and because the nature of man is his consciousness and his will, the State can analogically be said to be consciousness and will. It is therefore possible to speak of the objective will of all the people who compose it, that is to say, the will of their human nature.

And this collective will is in a certain way infinite, since it is the realization of the human will, and this will is by nature made for the Infinite, for the Universal; indeed, **“the will extends to the good in its universality; for its proper object is the universal good, just as the object of the intellect is the universal being”** (Summa Theologica, I, 105, 4).

The action of the State — in its own proper order, which is the natural order — therefore has no “limits.”

12. Content of the State

“The fascist State, which is the highest and most powerful form of personality, is a force, but a spiritual force — a force that sums up all the forms of moral and intellectual life of man. It cannot therefore be limited to purely order- and protection-related functions, as liberalism wished. It is not just a mechanical system that limits the sphere of so-called individual freedoms. It is a form, an inner rule, and a discipline of the entire being; it penetrates, it illuminates the intelligence. Its principle — the central inspiration of human personality living in civil community — penetrates into the mind of the individual and into the heart of the man of action as well as of the thinker, the artist, and the scholar: it is the soul of every soul.”

“The fascist State, which is the highest and most powerful form of personality, is a force, but a spiritual force — a force that sums up all the forms of moral and intellectual life of man.”

The State, as we have seen, is the most complete realization of human nature. It is indeed the “perfect community” (Saint Thomas, *De Regno*, I, 1); for it is only in the community or common life that all the latent potentialities of human nature are realized, since man is essentially social and political; so that the State is the most perfect realization of human nature.

And consequently, it is also the realization of the human spirit, of intelligence and of will; it is “the force which sums up all the forms of moral and intellectual life of man.”

It is the force of collective life, and thereby also of the individual life of each person, since the latter has value only as understood within collective life.



“It cannot therefore be limited [the State] to purely order- and protection-related functions, as liberalism wished. It is not just a mechanical system that limits the sphere of so-called individual freedoms.”

Here is precisely what Saint Thomas teaches, that political authority is responsible for the common good, that is, for the unity of all members of the political community in virtuous living — and not simply for the security and material well-being of individuals:

“It is evident that the goal of a multitude is to live according to virtue; indeed, men come together in order to live well together, which they cannot achieve if each remains isolated; now, to live well is to live according to virtue; **therefore, the end of human society is life according to virtue**” (De Regno, II, 3); hence the State is the one that charges itself with the common good of the City; so that the State must strive to make all citizens virtuous, by all possible means. The State, one might say, is responsible for the happiness of its citizens.

We see here the nobility of political authority, which, as the etymology of the term “authority” indicates, has the mission of making citizens act virtuously, that is, act according to human nature, which is rational by nature. This is the role that allows political individuals to actualize their nature and thereby attain true happiness.

This is what is also taught by the Magisterium of the Church:

“In order to assure this organic collaboration and this tranquil harmony [of society], Catholic doctrine claims for the State dignity and authority” (Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*).



“It is a form, an inner rule, and a discipline of the entire being; it penetrates both the will and the intellect. Its principle — the central inspiration of the human personality living in civil community — penetrates to the innermost depths of the individual [...]: it is the soul of every soul.”

This seems, once again, perfectly in accordance with the teaching of the Angelic Doctor:

“Just as in each man the soul governs the body [...], so every multitude must have a governing principle” (*De Regno*, I, 1); and the governing principle of a national multitude, of a people, is the political authority, which is called the State: it is indeed this authority that has charge of the common good.

Thus, the State is like the form or soul of the people, and of each person insofar as they are a member of the people; it is, so to speak, ‘the soul of every soul’; it is the soul of every intelligence and of every will.

The State is, in essence, the inner rule of all the individuals who compose it, since it embodies their nature, and nature is a rule of action.

And this is why it not only has the right, but also the duty, to impose a way of life on all citizens.

13. Authority

“All in all, fascism is not merely a legislator and founder of institutions; it is also an educator and promoter of spiritual life. It seeks to remake not the forms of human life, but its content: man, character, faith. And to this end, it desires a discipline and an authority that penetrate minds and reign there without rival. This is why its emblem is the “fasces of the lictors,” symbol of unity, strength, and justice.”

“All in all, fascism is not merely a legislator and founder of institutions; it is also an educator and promoter of spiritual life. It seeks to remake not the forms of human life, but its content: man, character, faith.”

The State does not only have a legislative and administrative purpose; it also has a properly spiritual end. This end is the pursuit of the common good, which is the unity of the City or of the community in virtue (since friendship in virtue is truly “friendship,” for to truly love another is to will his good, and the greatest good for man is virtue).

And this is why the State has an educational purpose: it must educate citizens, that is, lead them to the summit of virtue, not only when they are children — through national education — but also throughout their lives, through compulsory military service, the corporative system, and the commitment of all to the service of the public good, which is the greatest of natural virtues.

“We count as members of the same City only those who, under the same laws and the same State, are directed toward a life according to virtue” (Saint Thomas, De Regno, II, 3).



“Fascism wants to remake not the forms of human life, but its content: man, character, faith.”

These words have often been interpreted as expressing a revolutionary will to “create” a “new man” by freeing him from the laws of nature.

However, in light of what has been said previously, it seems rather that Gentile, by these words, meant nothing other than to reform man — that is, to form him as nature has naturally formed him, contrary to the Revolution which has deformed him.

To reform man is to give him back his character and his faith, his strength of will, and his belief in a “higher law” and an “objective will” — that is, in God (I, 5. Religious conception). Far from being revolutionary, fascism is, in this sense, profoundly reactionary.



“And to this end, [fascism] wants a discipline and an authority that penetrate minds and reign there without rival.”

Because authority is necessary to raise all members of a community to virtue (De Regno, I, 1), fascism wants the State to be authoritarian — that is, to claim its authority and impose it on everyone — willingly or by force; so that all individuals obey with discipline the injunctions of the State, and that they achieve, thanks

to this same State, the unity of the social body and the common practice of virtue.

And this is why fascism does not hesitate to call itself authoritarian.



“That is why its emblem is the ‘fasces of the lictors,’ symbol of unity, strength, and justice.”

Unity, strength, justice: these three words sum up well the essence of fascism.

The fascist State wants to be just, meaning it wants to give each citizen what is due to him — according to the rule of merit and demerit — in order to guarantee law.

It also wants to be strong, meaning capable of repressing enemies within, and waging war against enemies outside, to ensure the order necessary for the preservation of the City.

Finally, and above all, it wants to be one, by accepting no kind of “State within the State,” and by gathering all members of the City into one and the same unity — a unity that leads all citizens, in a collective spirit of mutual and benevolent emulation, toward the perfection of virtue.

Now, law, order, and unity of the City are precisely, according to Saint Thomas, the components of the political Common Good:

“If laws are just or conform to law, they have binding force. [...] Now, **we say that laws are just when they are ordered toward the Common Good.**” (Summa Theologica, I-II, 95, 4)

“There are precepts which directly involve the safeguarding of the **Common Good or of order** [...]; for example, in a City, the precept forbidding overthrowing the State or handing the city over to the enemy” (ibid., I-II, 100, 8)

“Sedition is opposed to the unity of the multitude, that is, to the unity of the people or **to the unity of the City.** [...] Thus, **sedition is opposed to the Common Good**” (ibid., II-II, 42, 2).

The fascist State, as a model of justice, strength, and unity, does nothing other than seek the Common Good.

Chapter Two

**POLITICAL AND
SOCIAL DOCTRINE**

(Benito Mussolini)

1. Against Pacifism: War and Life as a Duty

*Above all, fascism — in what concerns, in a general way, the future and development of humanity, and leaving aside any consideration of current politics — **believes neither in the possibility nor in the usefulness of perpetual peace. It rejects pacifism, which hides a flight from struggle and a cowardice before sacrifice. War alone brings all human energies to their highest point of tension and leaves a mark of nobility upon peoples who have the courage to face it.***

All other tests are only secondary and never place man before himself, in the alternative of life and death.

*Consequently, the pacifist doctrine is not the one most suited to fascism, which does not believe in it — even if it accepts that such doctrines might have a narrow, practical utility in certain political circumstances. All international constructions — as history shows — are swept away when feeling, **ideal, or interest stir the storm in people's hearts.***

The proud motto of the assault units, “Me ne frego” (“I don’t care”), written on the bandage of a wound, is not only a profession of stoic philosophy and the summary of a political doctrine, but also a training in struggle, the acceptance of the risks it involves; it is a new style of Italian life.

That is why fascism accepts and loves life, ignores suicide and sees in it cowardice; that is why it understands life as a duty, an elevation, a conquest: life must be noble and full, lived for itself, but above all for others — near and far, present and future.

“Fascism [...] believes neither in the possibility nor in the usefulness of perpetual peace. It rejects pacifism, which hides a flight from struggle and a cowardice before sacrifice.”

Fascism does not believe in the possibility of perpetual peace, first because it is realistic and knows that history is made of wars; next, because it understands that it is in the very nature of a political community to seek to universalize itself, even at the price, if necessary, of the destruction of a neighboring culture; so that man would probably still be led to wage war even in a state of pure, non-sinful nature. “The feeling, the ideal, or the interest” of peoples almost necessarily lead them to war.

Fascism also does not believe in the usefulness of perpetual peace, because it believes in the goodness of war, as will soon be seen.

It therefore condemns pacifism — which is, at bottom, “a flight from struggle” and “a cowardice before sacrifice” — because it understands that struggle is a moral duty for every man: **“It is necessary for the soul to suffer hardships and fight to attain certain goods or avoid certain evils”** (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, I-II, 23, 1), and that self-sacrifice for the City is a duty of justice for every citizen: **“All parts are ordered to the perfection of the whole: the whole is not for the parts, but the parts for the whole”** (Saint Thomas, Summa contra Gentiles, III, 112).



“War alone brings all human energies to their highest tension and leaves a mark of nobility on peoples who have the courage to face it. All other trials are only secondary and never place man face to face with himself, in the alternative of life and death.”

Fascism knows the goodness of war.

First, it understands — following Saint Thomas — that war is just when it is commanded by the head of State and aims to repair an injustice:

“Since the care of public affairs has been entrusted to the heads of State, it is their role to watch over the public good of the City, the kingdom, or the province under their authority. Therefore, those who legitimately defend this public good wield the sword against troublemakers and criminals; likewise, it belongs to them to defend the public good with the sword against enemies from outside. [...] It is also required that one attack the enemy for a reason of fairness: thus, wars are just when injustices must be punished; for example, to chastise a people or a City that has failed to punish a wrong committed by its citizens, or to restore what has been unjustly taken away.” (Summa Theologica, II-II, 40, 1)

War is therefore not an evil in itself, since it can be just. What is evil is not war, but the disordered passion that sometimes accompanies it:

“The desire to harm, cruelty in revenge (and not in legitimate self-defense), violence and inflexibility of spirit, the passion of pride, and other similar faults are what, in wars between just peoples, are rightly condemned.” (Saint Augustine, cited by Saint Thomas in the above article)

But fascism goes further: it understands that war has an essential goodness, insofar as it is the only trial capable of fully actualizing all the vitalities of human nature, particularly virtue and strength.

Strength, according to Saint Thomas, has paramount importance: it is the driving force of moral life, as the virtue par excellence of the will — which is the principle of moral life.

“Strength, considered as a certain firmness of the soul, is virtue in general, or rather the general condition of all virtue” (ibid., II-II, 123, 2).

Saint Thomas even says, following Saint Ambrose, that strength has a certain relationship to the most important virtue:

“Saint Ambrose says that ‘Strength is like the highest of all virtues’ [...] in terms of common utility, since it is needed in both domestic life and civic life [which are the main trials of life]” (ibid., II-II, 123, 12).

Now it is in great trials — and particularly in war, where one risks one’s life — that strength is manifested:

“Aristotle says that strength is exercised to the utmost with regard to death in war. Indeed [...], strength steels the human spirit against the greatest dangers, which are dangers of death. But because strength is a virtue, it necessarily turns towards good, and it follows that a man does not flee from danger unless it threatens him with some evil contrary to good reason. Death is an evil only in certain cases, namely when it comes from sickness, shipwreck, or assault by wild beasts or parasites; it is then directly contrary to the will, which pursues good. But mortal dangers encountered in war threaten man directly

because of a good — namely, because he defends the common good.”

“Therefore, it must be affirmed that strength specifically concerns the mortal dangers one faces in war” (ibid., II-II, 123, 5).

Hence the necessity of the goodness of war for fascism.



“The proud motto of the assault formations: “Me ne frego” (“I don’t care”), written on the bandage of a wound, is not only a profession of stoic philosophy [...] but also training for struggle, the acceptance of the risks it entails.”

For the fascist, man would have had to suffer even in a state of pure, non-sinful nature. He does not see suffering as a consequence in itself of original sin, but as something natural to man, from which he was exempt in the earthly paradise only by gratuitous gift:

“The immortality and impassibility of the primitive state did not depend on the natural conditions of matter, but on original justice” (Summa Theologica, I, 81, 5).

And since suffering is something natural, imposed on man, he must therefore endure it stoically.

But fascism also understands that it is necessary for man to fight against the evils he can overcome, namely those of which he is himself the origin. And that is why the fascist gives struggle an essential dimension of life.

If it is true that strength is to sustain, that is to say patience and perseverance, it is also to attack, that is to say audacity and struggle.



“fascism accepts and loves life, ignores suicide and sees in it cowardice; that is why it understands life as a duty, an elevation, a conquest: life must be noble and full, lived for itself, but above all for others — near and far, present and future.”

The fascist sees in life above all a duty towards oneself.

And this duty is founded on self-esteem, which is natural and good:

“Everything naturally esteems itself; by the inclination it strives, according to this sort of innate self-esteem, to preserve itself in existence, and to resist as much as it can what might destroy it” (Summa Theologica, II-II, 64, 5).

But since man is endowed with free will, the fascist understands that the true dignity of man lies in the rectitude of moral action, that is to say, in the uprightness of acting, in honor. That is also why the fascist sees in life a conquest: precisely, the conquest of his moral dignity, of his honor. Fascism sees in the man of honor the fully accomplished man.

As a reminder, honor, according to Saint Thomas, is something entirely laudable: it is the rectitude of will, the inner state of one who has always acted virtuously:

“External conduct is honorable when it reflects inner rectitude. Thus, honor lies radically in inner choice, even if it is signified in outward conduct” (ibid., II-II, 145, 1).

Therefore, since preserving oneself in existence is a duty towards oneself, and since honor consists in preserving moral dignity, it follows that the man of honor must always strive to remain alive.

But the fascist also sees in life a duty of justice towards others, towards political society.

For the life of the citizen as a citizen must be lived in the service of the State:

“The whole man is ordered as to his end to the entire community of which he is a part” (ibid., II-II, 65).

That is why fascism despises suicide, in which it sees nothing but cowardice towards oneself, and also a betrayal towards society.

First, cowardice, dishonor:

“Everything naturally esteems itself; by the inclination it strives, according to this sort of innate self-esteem, to preserve itself in existence, and to resist as much as it can what might destroy it.”

That is why suicide goes against this tendency of nature, against self-esteem, which consists in preserving oneself.

Second, injustice towards society: injustice occurs when man refuses the duty that comes to him from his belonging to the society of which he is a member. **By committing suicide, man makes himself guilty of injustice towards the society to which he belongs** (ibid., II-II, 64, 5).

One sees here, once again, the agreement of fascism and Thomism, which are both a “philosophy of life”

2. Demographic Policy and Our “Neighbor”

*“The Regime’s “demographic” policy is the consequence of these premises. **The fascist loves his “neighbor,” but this “neighbor” is not for him a vague and elusive idea: “love of neighbor” does not eliminate either the necessary educational strictness nor, even more so, distinctions and distances. The fascist rejects universal embraces;** and, while living within the community of civilized peoples, he looks them in the eyes with attention and mistrust, follows them in their states of mind and in the evolution of their interests; he does not let himself be deceived by shifting and misleading appearances.”*

“The fascist loves his ‘neighbor,’ but this ‘neighbor’ is not for him a vague and elusive idea: ‘love of neighbor’ does not eliminate either the necessary educational strictness nor, even more so, distinctions and distances.”

The fascist loves his neighbor, that is to say, he loves other men—not insofar as they are others, but insofar as they are men, in that they share the same human nature.

However, this love is not irrational: it remains consistent with the requirements of the natural order. Consequently, the fascist loves all men, but he first loves those who are close to him, particularly through ties of family, work, and homeland. He loves his wife and children before his neighbors, his neighbors before strangers, strangers belonging to his own City before strangers originating

from another City, etc. He understands that his own naturally come before others, and there can be no disordered charity.

Furthermore, love of neighbor, which is embodied in gentleness, must conform to the requirements of justice, that is, to the rule of merit and demerit. And Saint Thomas says nothing else:

“Mercy does not suppress justice; but it is, in a certain way, the fullness of justice” (Summa Theologica, I, 21, 3).

If mercy does not suppress justice, this means that for the exercise of mercy to be good, it is necessary to respect the order of justice. Therefore, “love of neighbor” does not eliminate either the necessary educational strictness nor, even more so, distinctions and distances.



“The fascist rejects universal embraces.”

If fascism is an idea of unity and political friendship, it nevertheless rejects the—Masonic—idea of a universal fraternity that would abolish all distinctions of sex, social condition, nationality, culture, religion, intelligence, or merit.

He considers that the only truly possible friendship is that between the members of the same City, and, at most, that between members of the same empire, when it is composed of several Cities sharing objectively the same culture, the same language, and the same religion—for the two are inseparable.

Reason also teaches that one can only truly love someone when one shares with them a large number of things. Common sense confirms

it: like attracts like. There is no possible friendship without a true unity of hearts and lives.

Authentic friendship is

“consensio rerum humanarum et divinarum cum benevolentia et caritate”

(Cicero, De Republica),

that is, unity of understanding in human and divine matters, with goodwill (love of the will) and charity (love of the heart).

3. Against Historical Materialism and the Class Struggle

“Such a conception of life makes fascism the absolute negation of that doctrine which constituted the basis of pseudoscientific or Marxist socialism: the doctrine of historical materialism, according to which the history of human civilization can be explained only by the struggles of interests between different social groups and by the transformation of the means and instruments of production. No one would think of denying that economic facts — discoveries of raw materials, new methods of work, scientific inventions — have their importance. But to claim that they are sufficient to explain human history, to the exclusion of all other factors, is absurd: fascism still believes in sanctity and in heroism, that is to say, in actions in which no economic motive, near or distant, plays any part.

*The doctrine of historical materialism, according to which men in history are nothing but figures acting and disappearing according to the true directing forces, leads to the negation of the permanent and ineluctable class struggle, the natural consequence of the economic conception of history, **and above all to the negation of the class struggle considered as the predominant factor of social transformations.** Once socialism has been struck at these two fundamental principles of its doctrine, nothing remains but the sentimental aspiration — as old as humanity — for a social order in which the sufferings and pains of the most humble are to be alleviated.*

But here, fascism rejects the idea of “economic” happiness, which would be realized socially and almost automatically at a given moment in the evolution of the economy, by assuring everyone the maximum of well-being. Fascism rejects the materialist conception of a possible “happiness” and abandons it to the economists of the first

half of the eighteenth century; and it therefore denies the equation well-being = happiness, which would transform men into animals thinking only of one thing: being fed and fattened, that is to say, reduced to a purely and simply vegetative life.”

“Such a conception of life makes fascism the absolute negation of that doctrine which constituted the basis of pseudoscientific or Marxist socialism: the doctrine of historical materialism, according to which the history of human civilization can be explained only by the struggles of interests between different social groups and by the transformation of the means and instruments of production.”

Thus, fascism is the negation of the class struggle conceived as the determining factor of social transformations. Because fascism is spiritualist, it opposes the view that history is nothing but the history of class struggle, or that it should be interpreted according to the economic laws that supposedly govern the development of the means and instruments of production. This clearly places fascism on the side of Catholic doctrine.

As a reminder, here is what Pius XI said in *Divini Redemptoris* about communism:

“This peril was threatening, you have already understood, Venerable Brothers, it is Bolshevik and atheistic communism, which seeks to overthrow order and undermine its very foundations in Christian civilization. [...]

Modern communism, in a way more evident than similar movements of the past, conceals under the appearance of a false redemption a pseudo-ideal of justice, equality, and fraternity in labor, which saturates the minds of the masses with its slogans and a certain mystical allure. It offers seductive but deceitful promises, spreading contagious enthusiasm, especially in a time when, we

note, because of a bad economic situation, abnormal misery reigns among the people in the midst of an abundance of goods in this world. [...]"

"The doctrine that communism hides under appearances sometimes so seductive has for its foundation the principles of Marx, the dialectical and historical materialism already advocated by Marx; the theorists of Bolshevism claim to possess a unique interpretation of life: there exists only one reality, matter, which evolves according to the laws of nature through the force of blind elements; plant, animal, man himself are nothing other than forms of matter that evolve in this way. They deny the existence of the spirit, of the soul, and therefore of all moral value, reducing everything to a mere phenomenon of matter that evolves in a perpetual flow of forces, toward the final synthesis: a society without classes. [...]"

This communism is intrinsically perverse.



"Fascism still believes in sanctity and in heroism, that is to say, in actions in which no economic motive, near or distant, plays any part."

Because fascism believes in the reality of the spirit, it believes in heroism and in sanctity — that is to say, in a life surpassing material, vegetative, and animal life, and devoted to the service of a higher ideal — whether that ideal be natural or supernatural, political or religious.

A higher ideal which, for the fascist, is an ideal of strength and devotion, an ideal of virtue: **"The ideal of dignity is linked to virtue"** (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, II-II, 168, 1).



“Fascism rejects the idea of “economic” happiness, which would be realized socially and almost automatically at a given moment in the evolution of the economy, by assuring everyone the maximum of well-being.”

Because fascism is spiritualist, it does not believe in happiness in this earthly life, but only in the happiness of the soul after death. And this is the reason why it rejects all utopias that would seek to establish a sort of “earthly paradise.”

“It [fascism] therefore denies the equation well-being = happiness, which would transform men into animals.”

Because fascism is spiritualist, because it considers man as superior to animals, it does not believe that human happiness can consist in the pleasure of the flesh or in material comfort. **“The perfect blessedness of man cannot depend on the body”** (Summa Theologica, I-II, 4, 5).

For the fascist, the only possible happiness is that of the spirit freed from the constraints of matter.

4. Against Democratic Ideologies

*After socialism, **fascism undermines the whole set of democratic ideologies and rejects them, both in their theoretical premises and in their practical applications.** Fascism denies that the multitude, by the sole fact of being the multitude, can direct human society; it denies that this multitude can govern by means of a periodic consultation; **it affirms the irremediable, fertile, and beneficent inequality of men,** who cannot become equal by a mechanical and extrinsic fact such as universal suffrage.*

*Thus one may define democratic regimes: those in which, from time to time, the people are given the illusion of sovereignty, whereas true and effective sovereignty resides in other forces, sometimes irresponsible and secret. **Democracy is a regime without a king, but with very many kings, sometimes more exclusive, more tyrannical, and more ruinous than a single king who would be a tyrant.***

*This explains why fascism, which up until 1922 — for contingent reasons — had shown republican tendencies, renounced them before the March on Rome, convinced that the question of the political forms of a State is not, today, essential, and that the study of past and present monarchies, of past and present republics, demonstrates that **monarchy and republic should not be judged sub specie aeternitatis but represent forms in which manifest the political evolution, history, tradition, and psychology of a given country.***

*Now, **fascism rises above the antithesis monarchy–republic, upon which democracy has lingered, charging the first with every insufficiency and presenting the second as a regime of perfection,** whereas*

one has seen profoundly reactionary and absolutist republics, and monarchies admitting the boldest political and social experiments.

“Fascism undermines the whole set of democratic ideologies and rejects them, both in their theoretical premises and in their practical applications.”

Fascism opposes the whole set of modern democratic ideologies, for they are all founded on the same doctrine, namely theoretical individualism, or the theory of the Social Contract — according to which individuals are not naturally political, but have come together in society only for individual interest.

Fascism, on the contrary, affirms that man is “**by nature a political animal**” (Aristotle, Politics, I, 2).

And in this, it conforms well to the teaching of Saint Thomas, who — against Augustinianism, according to which political society would be a consequence of original sin, essentially punitive in vocation — strongly affirms the political nature of man:

“For the other animals [than man], nature has prepared food, covering of fur, means of defense such as horns, teeth, claws, or speed in flight; man, on the contrary, is created without any of these things being supplied to him by nature; in exchange, he has been provided with reason, which enables him to achieve all these things with the help of his hands. But since what one man alone can prepare does not suffice for all, and he cannot provide entirely for his own existence, **it follows that it is natural for man to live in society.**”

Moreover, among other animals there is implanted a natural faculty to discern what is useful or harmful to them; the sheep naturally perceives in the wolf an enemy; likewise, by a natural faculty, some

animals know healing plants and all their means of subsistence. Man, however, has by nature only a very general knowledge of his means of existence; by reason, he can reach knowledge of the particular things necessary to human life through reasoning from the principles of nature. But since a single individual cannot achieve this in its entirety, **it is necessary for men to live together** in order to help each other and specialize in diverse studies according to the diversity of their talents: one in medicine, another in this, another again in that.”

“Since it is fitting for man to live in society, given that, solitary, he would not suffice for his existence, a society will be all the more perfect the more it suffices for itself in the needs of life. A family alone, confined to a single domain, does indeed provide some sufficiency for vital needs, namely those relating to natural acts of nutrition, generation, and similar functions; a single city will suffice for itself in a single craft; **but only the City, which is the perfect community, will suffice for itself in all the needs of life**, and even more so the province [or union of several Cities], because it could alone provide for the need of mutual assistance in resistance against enemies” (De Regno, I, 1).

Thus fascism considers as a certain truth that “man is by nature a political animal,” and, therefore, that it is natural for him to belong to a family, to intermediary bodies, and to a City or a State.

“We must begin with man and move through his organic units, and thus we shall raise man to the family, from the family to the city and the syndicate, and we shall end in the State which will be the harmony of the whole” (José Antonio Primo de Rivera, *Textos de doctrina política*).

Fascism therefore rejects the theory of the Social Contract. And with it, the democratic ideology that logically derives from it, as well as

all its practical consequences, such as the electoral system and the referendum.



“Fascism denies that the multitude, by the sole fact of being the multitude, can direct human society.”

Indeed, because the government of a community has as its end the assurance of the unity of common action, and since one cannot give what one does not have, it follows that the multitude cannot govern.

And Saint Thomas says nothing other than this:

“If it is necessary for man to live in society, it follows that it is also necessary that among men there be some principle of direction of the multitude. For, men being numerous, and each providing for his own particular interest, their society would fall apart if there were not some principle providing for the good of this multitude; just as the body of man or of any animal whatsoever would disintegrate if there were not in this body some directive force common to all, tending to the common good of all the members. [...] Every multitude must therefore have a directive principle.” (De Regno, I, 1).

Thus, fascism rejects the democratic ideology which would have the multitude as such govern public affairs.



“Fascism affirms the irremediable, fertile, and beneficent inequality of men.”

In opposition to all democratic and egalitarian conceptions, fascism wishes to be fundamentally anti-egalitarian. It holds that inequality among men is natural, by necessity, and moreover useful and good.

Some Catholics may perhaps be scandalized to hear such things. Or else, while admitting the actual inequality of men, they will affirm — with Saint Gregory (“where we have not committed a fault, we are all equal”) — that inequality is a consequence of original sin.

But the opinion of Saint Thomas is quite different, for whom inequality is a fact of nature:

“It is therefore necessary that there was in the primitive state [that is, in the state before original sin] a certain inequality, first as to sex, for without the difference of sex there would not have been generation; likewise for age; likewise in this state, some men were begotten by others, and those who united carnally were not sterile.

“But even with regard to the soul there would have been differences, as to knowledge, and even as to justice; indeed, man does not act by necessity, but by virtue of his free will; now, by virtue of this, man has the power to apply his mind more or less to doing, to willing, or to knowing something. Thus, some would have made more progress than others in knowledge and in justice.

“On the side of the body there would also have been inequalities. For the body was not entirely freed from the laws of nature and of corruptibility: men would not have failed to receive more or fewer advantages and disadvantages from exterior factors, since their life also depended on the use of food. And it can be said that,

according to the different dispositions of the air, or of the stars, some would have been begotten more vigorous of body than others, taller, more beautiful, with a better complexion.” (Summa Theologica, I, 96, 3).

Thus, it is in the intentio naturae that there be inequality of intelligence, of virtue, and of strength among men.

Now, insofar as inequality is a fact of nature, it must be added that the domination of man over man is also natural — against Saint Augustine (“God wanted man, a reasonable being, made in His image, not to dominate man, but only the beast”) — and that this domination is therefore something entirely just.

Here is how Aristotle justifies the domination of man over man in his Politics:

“Authority and obedience are not only necessary things; they are also good things. Some beings, at the very moment of their birth, are destined, some to obey, others to command, well before there are as many nuances and varieties for some as for others.” (I, 2. De l’esclavage).

And here is how Saint Thomas, following Aristotle, justified his view:

“The domination of man over man would have existed in the state of innocence for two reasons. First, because man is by nature a political animal, so much so that even in the state of innocence men would have had a political life. But the political life of a multitude could not exist without a leader who seeks the common good; for several people necessarily seek several ends, but only one seeks a single end. This is what makes Aristotle say: ‘Every time several

elements are ordered to a single end, one always finds one who takes the lead and directs.'

The second reason is that if a man had been superior to another in knowledge and in justice, he would have had to employ this superiority in the service of others. In this sense, it is written: 'Each of you, according to the grace received, put yourselves at the service of others' (1 Peter 4:10)."

(Summa Theologica, I, 96, 4).

Thus, the strongest, the most intelligent, and the most virtuous are, by nature, called to rule over others, for their own good.

"It is false that all men have the same rights in civil society and that there does not exist legitimate hierarchy."

(Pius XI, Divini Redemptoris).

And fascism says nothing other than this.



"Democracy is a regime without a king, but with very many kings, sometimes more exclusive, more tyrannical, and more ruinous than a single king who would be a tyrant."

A tyrant is he who, being—fully or partially—sovereign, does not seek the political common good but only his own particular good. Now, democracy is the regime in which all individuals hold a share of sovereignty, each seeking his own private interest. A democratic society—in the Aristotelian sense of the term—is therefore, by nature, a society of tyrants.

This is what Saint Thomas means when he says that **“in a democratic regime [...] the people is like a single tyrant”** (De Regno, I, 1). It is also in this sense that Étienne Gilson defines democracy as **“the tyranny of the crowd”** (Thomas Aquinas: Texts on Morality), and Claude Polin as **“the tyranny of all over all”** (Totalitarianism).

A democracy understood in this way is, therefore, a regime where each individual is a sovereign tyrant, caring only for his private interest, whereas true kings are called to govern for the good of society as a whole.



“monarchy and republic should not be judged sub specie aeternitatis but represent forms in which manifest the political evolution, history, tradition, and psychology of a given country.”

At once against the “republicans,” who make the republic—or the government of the citizens—the only acceptable regime, and against the “monarchists,” who make monarchy—that is, the government of one alone—the only good regime, fascism considers that monarchy and republic are neutral regimes, which therefore can only be judged according to concrete circumstances: to such a City a republic may be more fitting, to another a monarchy; to such an epoch the government of the citizens may be possible, to another epoch the government of one alone may be necessary. Fascism is not an ideology, but a deep pragmatism.

For the fascist, a regime is good insofar as it pursues the common good, whether that regime be a monarchy or a republic.

Now, Aristotle said nothing different:

“When the government of one alone has as its object the common good, it is called monarchy, or commonly kingship. [...] And when a great number govern in the sense of the common good, the government receives as its specific denomination the generic name of all governments, and is called republic.” (Politics, III, 5).

And Saint Thomas takes up the same distinction in De Regno (I, 1).

Here again, one sees the agreement between Thomism and fascism, which both make the common good the only absolute in politics.



“fascism rises above the antithesis monarchy–republic, upon which democracy has lingered, charging the first with every insufficiency and presenting the second as a regime of perfection”

Fascism rises above the monarchy-republic antithesis precisely because it does not conceive these two regimes as contradictory, as if one were good and the other bad. Rather, it understands that both regimes can be good, so long as they pursue the common good.

Thus, it opposes itself to the democratic ideology, which makes the republic—or the government of the citizens—the only acceptable regime, and monarchy an essentially bad regime.

On the contrary, fascism aims to be, in this sense, a “synthesis” of monarchy and republic—as will be seen later (II, 5)—insofar as it seeks to integrate both the advantages of monarchy (authority, institutional stability) and those of the republic (organic unity, spirit of initiative), in order to better assure the unity of the City, which is its common good.

And—as will also be seen—this synthesis of monarchy and republic, which fascism wants to incarnate, in fact corresponds to “the best form of government” according to Saint Thomas (*Summa Theologica*, I–II, 105, 1).

5. The Lies of Democracy

*“Reason, science,” said Renan (who had some pre-fascist insights) in one of his Philosophical Dialogues, **“are products of humanity; but to want reason directly for the people and by the people is chimerical.** It is not necessary, for the full existence of reason, that the entire world perceives it. In any case, such an initiation, if it were to take place, could not come through low democracy, which seems rather bound to bring about the extinction of all difficult culture and all higher discipline... **The principle that society exists only for the well-being and freedom of the individuals who compose it does not seem in conformity with the plans of nature, plans in which only the species is taken into consideration and the individual seems sacrificed.** One may strongly fear that the ultimate word of democracy, thus understood (I hasten to say that it can be understood otherwise), is nothing other than a social state in which a degenerate mass would have no other concern than to indulge in the ignoble pleasures of vulgar man.”*

“Thus speaks Renan. Fascism rejects, in democracy, the absurd conventional lie of political equality, the spirit of collective irresponsibility, and the myth of infinite happiness and progress.

*But, if democracy were to be understood differently—that is, **if democracy meant not to exclude the people from the State—then fascism could be defined, as the author of this book has done, as “organized, centralized, authoritarian democracy.”***

Thus, fascism is opposed to democracy.

Let us recall that both Aristotle and Saint Thomas Aquinas classify democracy among degenerate regimes.

Let us quote Aristotle when he sets out the different forms of government:

“When the government of one alone has as its object the Common Good, we call it monarchy, or commonly kingship. Under the same condition, the government of a few, provided it is not reduced to a single individual, is called aristocracy [...]. Finally, when a large number govern in the sense of the Common Good, the government receives the special denomination of polity among all governments, and is named polity (politeia in Greek). [...] **The perversions of these governments are:** tyranny for monarchy; oligarchy for aristocracy; and **for polity, democracy.** Tyranny is the government for the good of the ruler; oligarchy for the interest of the rich; **democracy has as its object the interest of the members of the people. None of these governments has in view the Common Good of the City.**”

(Politics, III, 5)

Saint Thomas says nothing else:

“If an unjust rule is exercised by many, it is called democracy, that is to say, the power of the people, when indeed the people oppress the rich by the force of the multitude. Thus, if the whole people were as tyrannical as one single man, **the entire people would be like a single tyrant.**”

(De Regno, I, 1)

Some will say this is playing with words, that Aristotle and Saint Thomas did not understand the same thing we moderns mean by “democracy.”

But names are not what matter: if “democracy” meant the domination or power of the people, and if these two authors condemned it, it was simply because power exercised by the formless multitude of the people was unacceptable to them.

Indeed, in democracy, the members of the people pursue only their private interests, without regard for the Common Good of the City. Now, it is one thing to pursue one's own particular good, another to seek the Common Good; for a whole is not reducible to the sum of its parts.

The Common Good is not reducible to the sum of particular goods.

As for the form of government in which a great number governs, Saint Thomas, following Aristotle, calls it "polity":

"If the government is exercised by a great number of citizens, it receives the common name of polity (politia in Latin); it is the case when the army exercises power in the City or the province."

(De Regno, I, 1)

In such a regime, explains Saint Thomas (Politics, III, 16), the citizens do not govern in an anonymous and egalitarian way, but hierarchically and corporatively (each citizen is a member of the City through the intermediary of the communities to which he belongs).

We should note in passing that the example of polity given by Saint Thomas is nothing other than a military government...; this is very far from egalitarian democracy as it is understood today. And if the holy Doctor considers the power of a large number such as that of the army, it is for the following reason:

"It is very difficult that those who reach perfection in virtue should be numerous; except with regard to the virtue of soldiers (the virtue of strength), where it is possible that a great number may excel."

(ibid., III, 16, 393)

Thus, what Mussolini calls “organized, centralized, authoritarian democracy” is nothing other than Thomistic polity.



“to want reason directly for the people and by the people is chimerical.” affirms Mussolini following Renan.

The doctrine of popular sovereignty, which would have all members of the people possess the wisdom and virtue necessary for the exercise of power, is indeed nothing but fiction.

“It is easy to find in the City one person or a few who far surpass the others in virtue; but it is extremely difficult to find many who attain the perfection of virtue.” (Politics, III, 16, 393).

And it is rigorously impossible that all members of the people possess the virtues necessary for the exercise of power and the pursuit of the Common Good — namely, prudence and justice; democracy, in principle, entrusts power to the irresponsible.

Let us note in passing that the doctrine of popular sovereignty, according to which authority would reside primarily in the people, was formally condemned by the Holy Church because of its opposition to Catholic doctrine: let us cite Saint Pius X, in his letter on *Le Sillon*:

“In politics, the Sillon does not abolish authority; it esteems it, on the contrary, necessary; but it wishes to share it, or, to put it better, to multiply it in such a way that every citizen will become a kind of king. Authority, it is true, would emanate from God, but it would

reside primarily in the people, and would disengage from them by way of election or, better still, selection, without for all that the people abandoning it and becoming independent of it; it would be exterior to them only in appearance; in reality, it would be interior, because it would be a consented authority. [...] Thus the Sillon places primarily political authority in the people, from which it then derives to the rulers, in such a way, however, that it continues to reside in them.

Now, Leo XIII formally condemned this doctrine in his Encyclical *Diuturnum illud* on Political Authority, where he says: ‘Modern men in great number [...] declare that all authority comes from the people; that in consequence those who exercise power in society do not exercise their own authority, but one delegated to them by the people; whence it follows that society is free from its own authority as it pleases; and that authority is nothing other than the will of the people, so that the people is able to revoke what it has given at its pleasure. On the contrary, the opinion of Catholics is that the right to govern comes from God, as from its natural and necessary principle.’

Without doubt, the Sillon makes this authority descend from God, but it places it first in the people, in such a way that, to use its own expression: ‘it rises again from below to go above, whereas, in the organization of the Church, power descends from above to go below’” (Marc Sangnier, Discourse of Rouen, 1907, cited by Pius X).

“But besides the fact that it is abnormal that delegation should ascend, since it is of its nature to descend, Leo XIII had already refuted this attempt to reconcile Catholic doctrine with the error of democratism. For he continues: ‘It is important to remark here: **those who preside over the government of the public thing may indeed, in certain cases, be elected by the will and the judgment of a great number, without repugnance and**

without opposition to Catholic doctrine. But if this choice designates the ruler, it does not give him the power to govern [...], but it designates the person in whom this power will be invested.”



“The principle that society exists only for the well-being and freedom of the individuals who compose it does not seem in conformity with the plans of nature, plans in which only the species is taken into consideration and the individual seems sacrificed.” recalls Mussolini, citing Renan.

This affirmation is entirely in conformity with the principle of totality, so dear to Saint Thomas. **“All the parts are ordained to the perfection of the whole: the whole is not for the parts, but the parts for the whole”** (Summa contra Gentiles, III, 112). Indeed, the hand is made for the body and not the reverse; thus it naturally protects it if attacked. Likewise, the bee is at the service of the hive, to the point that it is ready to die for it. And if the part naturally sacrifices itself for the whole, it is proof that it is made for it.

Now, the individual is to political society what the part is to the whole, since he is by nature a member of it. Therefore, **“the whole man is ordered as to his end to the whole community of which he is a part”** (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, II-II, 65); the City is not for the citizens, but the citizens for the City.

Furthermore, **“the good of the part is for the good of the whole”** (ibid., I-II, 109, 3), since the part is for the whole. Hence it follows that all the particular goods of individuals are ordered to the Common Good of the Totality.

The Common Good is indeed better than particular goods. And it “is better, not inasmuch as it would comprehend the singular good of all singulars — it would then not have the unity of the Common Good insofar as this is in some way universal; it would be a mere collection, it would not be materially better. **“The Common Good is better for each of the particulars who participate in it, insofar as it is communicable to other particulars: its communicability is of the very essence of its perfection”** (Charles De Koninck, On the Primacy of the Common Good against the Personalists, I).

Thus, the City is made to pursue the Common Good, and not to guarantee the well-being — that is to say, the material happiness — of the liberty of individuals. Hence it has the right to demand sacrifices if necessary, as the Common Good requires it, since the particular goods are ordered to the Common Good.



“if democracy meant not to exclude the people from the State—then fascism could be defined, as the author of this book has done, as “organized, centralized, authoritarian democracy.”

Fascism, which is entirely opposed to egalitarian democracy, cannot however accept an absolute monarchy where citizens would be entirely excluded from participation in public affairs.

Here again, it joins the teaching of Saint Thomas: “Two points must be observed in the good organization of a City or a nation. First, **it is necessary that all the people participate more or less in government**, for, as the second book of the Politics says, this is a guarantee of civil peace, and all cherish and support such a state of

affairs. The other point concerns the form of government and the organization of powers: it is known that there are several, distinct according to Aristotle, but the most remarkable is **monarchy, or the rule of a single one over all**, and after this aristocracy, that is, the government of the best, or domination of a few chosen by virtue. **Wherever another form of government is found for a City or a kingdom, with a head placed above all, by reason of his virtue, having authority over all; then a certain number of subordinate chiefs, qualified by their virtue; and yet the multitude is not estranged from the power thus defined, since all have the possibility of being elected**" (Summa Theologica, I-II, 105, 1).

Thus, the best political regime is one that can reconcile the authority of the Chief and the organicity of the Whole.

It must rest on the authority of one Chief, for the common good consists in the unity of the City (De Regno, I, 2), and only one authority can pursue the common good in the unity of the City.

At the same time, it is a regime that must ensure the organicity of the Whole, meaning the fact that all citizens take part, in one way or another, in public affairs, so that no one maintains his life apart from the whole, and so that no one perishes without the whole perishing with him, and no part disappears without the whole being diminished.

Thus **the regime appears as a fortunate mixture of monarchy, by the preeminence of one; of aristocracy, by the participation of subordinate chiefs qualified by virtue; and of republic finally, or of a popular regime, by the fact that ordinary citizens can be chosen as chiefs** (ibid.).

It should be noted here that when Saint Thomas speaks of monarchy and aristocracy, he is not at all speaking necessarily of

hereditary regimes: by monarchy, he simply means government by one man alone, whether king or emperor, Prime Minister or dictator, Duce or Guide; and by aristocracy, he means the power of the most virtuous, which, far from feudalism, remains no less submissive to the unique Chief.

As for the republic of which he speaks, it has nothing in common with the republic as conceived by Enlightenment philosophers; it is simply the regime where all citizens participate, in one way or another, in public affairs.

Thus, the regime advocated by Saint Thomas is in short an organic “mono-archia,” or, considered in another sense, an authoritarian “res-publica.”

Now, this is precisely what Mussolini advocates, who considers the fascist regime as an “organized, centralized, authoritarian democracy,” while excluding any form of egalitarianism, and making of the Chief — the “Duce” — the only true sovereign, that is, the sole holder of authority, of the entire political community.

And if fascism aspires to this “synthesis” of authoritarianism and organicism, it is because it desires nothing other than the Common Good of the City, which requires these two elements since it consists in the unity of the Whole.

“Fascism is not a tactic — violence —; it is an idea: unity”
(José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Textos de doctrina política).

6. Against Liberal Doctrines

With respect to liberal doctrines, fascism is in a state of absolute opposition, both in the political domain and in the economic domain. One must not exaggerate — for simple reasons of present-day polemic — the importance of liberalism in the last century, and, when it was but one of many doctrines that arose in that century, make it into a religion of humanity for all present and future times. Liberalism had only a few moments of favor. It was born in 1830, as a reaction against the Holy Alliance, which wanted to bring Europe back to the principles of 1789, and it experienced a moment of splendor in 1848, when even Pius IX declared himself a liberal. Immediately afterwards, however, began its decline. If 1848 was a year of light and hope, 1849 was a year of darkness and tragedy. From then on, liberalism was only able to give birth to a single republic, the French Republic. That same year, Marx launched the gospel of the socialist religion in his famous Communist Manifesto.

In 1851, Napoleon III staged his anti-liberal coup d'état and reigned over France until 1870. He was overthrown by a popular movement, following one of the most shameful military defeats in history. The victor was Bismarck, who always held to the religion of liberty and its prophets. It is symptomatic that a people of high civilization, like the German people, completely ignored, throughout the 19th century, the religion of liberty.

There was only one parenthesis, represented by what has been called the “ridiculous parliament of Frankfurt,” which lasted only a year. Germany achieved its national unity beyond liberalism, against liberalism, a doctrine that seems foreign to the German spirit, even contrary to it. And if the liberals claimed that liberalism is the historical anticipation or the logical equivalent of anarchy, the stages of German unity are the three wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870, carried out by “liberals” like Moltke and Bismarck.

As for Italian unity, liberalism played only a secondary role compared to the contribution of Mazzini and Garibaldi, who were not liberals. Without the intervention of the anti-liberal Napoleon, we would not have had Lombardy; and without the help of the anti-liberal Bismarck at Sadowa and Sedan, it is very probable that we would not have had Venice in 1866, and in 1870 we would not have entered Rome.

During the period 1870–1915, liberalism itself sank into decadence, its very creed collapsing. In literature, it was beaten down; in practice, by activism.

Activism: that is nationalism, futurism, fascism. The so-called “liberal” century (that is to say, the 19th) after having accumulated an infinity of theoretical knots, found itself defeated by the hecatomb of the World War. But what strange religion is one that sacrifices itself in battle? Were the gods of liberalism thirsty for blood? Now, after twenty years of this sacrifice, liberalism has been driven from the world. Liberalism means, in politics, individualism; in economics, it means agnosticism toward the State; that is, indifference toward the State itself, reduced to the functions of a night-watchman, entrusted only with the task of registering births and deaths. This is why liberalism is a word devoid of meaning in all modern political languages. The world is turning its back on the doctrines of the 19th century, on liberalism, which is no longer even defended by its professors, as if liberalism were the supreme and incomparable word of civilization.

We will make here only one comment — since the greater part of this text is more historical than philosophical — namely: that one cannot actually find anything more opposed to liberalism, and to democracy which logically goes hand in hand with it, than fascism.

“Fascism, in its concrete realization, is nothing other than the economic-political reaction against democratic

liberalism; a reaction that can be healthy, and even Catholic, depending on the environment in which it develops.” (abbé Julio Meinville, *Conception catholique de la politique*).

A healthy reaction, that is to say, one that is in conformity with the requirements of the natural order, of the principles of Thomist philosophy — or realist — and of morality.

Catholic, that is to say, in conformity with the requirements of the supernatural order, of Charity.

7. Fascism Does Not Go Backwards

The fascist negations of socialism, democracy, and liberalism must not, however, lead one to believe that fascism intends to bring the world back to what it was before 1789, the date considered as the inauguration of the liberal-democratic century. One does not go backwards. Fascist doctrine did not choose de Maistre as a prophet. Monarchic absolutism belongs to the past, just as ecclesiolatry, feudal privileges, or closed caste systems with sealed barriers. The fascist idea of authority has nothing to do with the police state.

A party that governs a nation “totalitarianly” is something new in history. Parallels and comparisons are impossible. From the ruins of liberal, socialist, and democratic doctrines, fascism extracts the elements that still retain vital value. It preserves what one might call the acquired facts of history; but it rejects all the rest, that is, the idea of a doctrine good for all times and for all peoples. By admitting that the 19th century was the century of socialism, liberalism, democracy, it does not follow that the 20th century must likewise be the century of socialism, liberalism, and democracy. Political doctrines pass, peoples remain.

One may think that the current century is the century of authority, of the “right,” a fascist century; and that, if the 19th century was the century of the individual (liberalism meaning individualism), one may think that the 20th century is the century of the “collective,” and therefore, the century of the State. It is perfectly logical that a new doctrine might use the elements still vital from other doctrines.

No doctrine can claim an “absolute” originality. It is linked, at least historically, to past doctrines, to future doctrines.

Thus socialism is linked to the utopian socialism of Fourier, Owen, Saint-Simon; thus the liberalism of the 19th century is connected to the movement of the “enlightened” of the 18th century, and democratic doctrines are tied to the Encyclopédie.

Doctrine tends to direct human activity toward a determined goal; but human activity reacts on doctrine, transforms it, adapts it to new needs or disasters. Doctrine itself must therefore be not a rigid truth, but a work in progress. From this comes the pragmatic character of fascism, its willingness to live, its will to exist, its position regarding “violence” and its value.

“The fascist negations of socialism, democracy, and liberalism must not, however, lead one to believe that fascism intends to bring the world back to what it was before 1789 [...] Fascist doctrine did not choose de Maistre as a prophet. Monarchic absolutism belongs to the past, just as ecclesiolatry, feudal privileges, or closed caste systems with sealed barriers.”

This will certainly not please the legitimists and other nostalgics of the Ancien Régime.

But let us be clear: fascism by no means approves of the Revolution that destroyed the natural order; on the contrary, it firmly condemns it, and it rejects along with it the ideas of the Enlightenment which are its principles, as well as democracy, liberalism, and socialism which are its consequences. Mussolini is extremely clear on this point.

However, fascism does not intend to return to the Ancien Régime, because it understands that the primary causes of the downfall of the latter are its own limitations, namely, above all, its absence of a national spirit and its lack of organicity.



The fascist doctrine did not choose de Maistre as ‘prophet,’ because the latter did not understand that the national idea, even if it had been accidentally promoted by the Revolution, is essentially good, that is to say, in conformity with the natural order. As a reminder, the Catholic Church itself has recognized the value of the idea of nation: “**race, nation, state, the form of the state, the depositories of power,**” recalls Pius XI in *Mit brennender Sorge* — “**fundamental values of the human community**” and “things which hold in the earthly order a necessary and honorable place.”

Fascism also rejects “monarchical absolutism [...], just as it does ecclesiolatry, feudal privileges, or castes closed with impenetrable barriers,” because it understands that these things are the principal reasons for the lack of organicity of the Ancien Régime; organicity which, let us recall, is seen by Saint Thomas (following Aristotle) as something good and even necessary for the survival of the City: “**it is necessary that everyone participate more or less in government,** for therein lies, according to the second book of the *Politics*, a guarantee of civil peace” (*Summa Theologica*, I-II, 105, 1).

Hence the rejection of absolute monarchy, which excludes any real participation of citizens in public affairs; and, moreover, of hereditary monarchy by divine right, which makes belonging to a family — supposedly chosen by God — the criterion of legitimacy, whereas the latter is founded on nothing other than the effective pursuit of the Common Good: “**What is the ultimate and definitive criterion for recognizing legitimacy? It is the community which, in its habitual adhesion, gives juridical efficacy to the regime of government [...]. This habitual adhesion testifies that the Common Good is attained in**

this society” (Abbé Julio Meinvielle, Catholic Conception of Politics).

Hence also the rejection of hereditary aristocracy, which is contrary to the true nature of aristocracy, founded not on blood but on virtue: **“aristocracy is [...] the power of the most virtuous”** (Saint Thomas, De Regno, I, 1).

Hence, finally, the rejection of the caste system, that is to say, of closed classes, which prevents citizens belonging to an inferior class but showing virtue from attaining power (or citizens belonging to a superior class but showing vice from being cast down from their rank), whereas **distributive justice requires that “by their virtue [...], ordinary citizens may be chosen as leaders”** (Summa Theologica, I-II, 105, 1).

As for the “ecclesiolatry” denounced by Mussolini, that is to say clericalism — which would have clerics govern the City by reason of their clerical status — it is indeed contrary to a sound conception of the relationship between temporal power and spiritual power, and more generally between nature and the supernatural:

“We believe, as is agreed, that grace blossoms forth in nature, acts within it as a kind of leaven, regenerates it from within, endows it with a surplus vitality whose immediate result is to adapt it to the grasp of objects beyond its native reach. We further believe that, while elevating it, grace also heals and restores nature; **but we hold that healed nature is only more perfectly itself, and that by reason of its healing it cannot be stripped of its proper functions — healed nature signifying nature better disposed to its proper functions.**”

(Louis Lachance, L’Humanisme politique de saint Thomas d’Aquin — individu et État).

“Thus, the temporal or political struggle rightly belongs to the layman, so that “the clergy should be led not to participate in this struggle [...]. The [task] of the layman is the combat, the guardianship, the defense of his homeland, of his household.”

(Jean Ousset, *Mission politique du laïc*).

The rejection of clericalism goes hand in hand with the rejection of royal absolutism.

Thus, regarding democracy, “fascism preserves what one might call the established facts of history; but it rejects everything else, that is to say, the conception of a doctrine valid for all times and for all peoples.” Fascism does not seek a return to the Ancien Régime, for it holds that the latter has had its time; and yet, it unequivocally opposes the ideas of the Revolution and of democracy.



Fascism does not go backward, because it establishes a new order, a political order more in conformity with the natural order and its requirements. It does not go backward, because it makes the State an absolute, something unprecedented in the history of humanity.

Fascism sees itself as the founder of the “collective century,” and consequently, of the “century of the State”; “State” here being understood not in the sense of a mere state institution, but in the sense of a political whole. For fascism, the State is not reduced to the Leader; the State is the totality of citizens, it is the City.

Why is fascism collectivist, or statist? Because it understands that the collectivity, or political community, is the most perfect of communities: **“The most perfect community is that of the**

City, for it is ordered to everything that is in itself necessary for a human life” (Saint Thomas, Commentary on the Politics, Proem. 4); and even that it is the most perfect of immanent realities, for it is, on this earth, the only entity truly autonomous, or autarchic, that is to say, “capable of sufficing for itself” (De Regno, I, 1). From a fascist perspective, **“the City is not a community of place established in order to avoid mutual injustices and to permit exchanges. [...] The City is the community ordered to the good life, that is, whose end is a perfect and autarchic life”** (Aristotle, Politics, III).

It is true that man can live by himself; yet he cannot live well, that is, live humanly, by his own strength. Man as man, considered in himself, or as an independent entity, is nothing; a man alone is not a man. **Only the State or the political community, within the natural order, is a reality in act through itself.**



“Doctrine tends to direct human activity toward a determined goal; but human activity reacts on doctrine, transforms it, adapts it to new needs or disasters. [...] From this comes the pragmatic character of fascism.”

Fascism does not go backward, because it clearly sees that concrete circumstances change, and that to new circumstances there must correspond new methods or ways of acting. And this is what it means to be pragmatic — not in the sense of being relativistic, but in the sense of being realistic.

Fascism is not relativistic, because it understands that there exists a natural order, unchangeable, identical in all times and places; it

believes in “a permanent and universal reality from which [passing and particular reality] borrows its being and its life,” and knows that “to know men one must know man, one must know reality and its laws” (The Doctrine of Fascism, I, 1). And that is why fascism, insofar as it is in conformity with the natural order, presents itself as a universal doctrine: “it has [...] an ideal content which raises it to the rank of a superior truth” (ibid.).

And yet, fascism is not ideological, but rather intends to be pragmatic, because it admits the evolution of concrete circumstances, linked “to the contingencies of place and time” (ibid.). It acknowledges the fact that mentalities change, and therefore that ways of acting which were suitable yesterday are no longer suitable today.

In sum, fascism is realistic. In Aristotelian terms, we would say that fascism is a universal form of State or political regime, but one destined to be individualized according to the contingencies of time and place.



Fascism seeks to put an end to the corrupt order of democracy; it therefore belongs to the Counter-Revolution.

But the Counter-Revolution that fascism proposes is not a return backward, or the “contrary of revolution” advocated by de Maistre; it is rather a contrary revolution. Fascism knows in fact that before reconstructing, it will first be necessary to deconstruct: “If socialism is destructive and wishes to make disappear the last vestiges of spirituality before constructing its atheism and materialism, **fascism also entails a work of destruction, destruction of all the disorder accumulated by moribund democracy,**

before constructing its spiritualist regime, which must impose respect for Charity in all the social manifestations of the individual” (Adrien Arcand, Serviam).

And insofar as fascism is revolutionary, its position intends to be “pragmatic [...] with regard to the fact of violence and to its value.”

Indeed, fascism admits a form of violence. For one does not destroy an unjust violence—that is, something which opposes the natural order, which is against nature—except by another violence, which, insofar as it destroys the first violence and thereby restores things to order, is in itself just.

In an era against nature, one can therefore oppose only the violence of fascism: **“The violence which fascism employs is justified as soon as one understands the present era, which is an era of violence”** (Abbé Julio Meinvielle, Catholic Conception of Economics).

Violence is certainly not an absolute, an end in itself; but it is a **necessary**—and therefore legitimate—means in order to arrive at the restoration of a society in conformity with the natural order willed by God. Fascism is, quite simply, realistic.

8. Value and Mission of the State

*The essential principle of fascist doctrine is the conception of the State—its essence, its role, its ends. **For fascism, the State is the absolute before which individuals and groups are only relative. Individuals and groups are conceivable only within the State.** The liberal State does not direct the play and the material and spiritual development of collectivities, but limits itself to recording the results. The fascist State is conscious, it has a will, and that is why it is described as an “ethical” State.*

*In 1929, I said before the first five-year assembly of the Regime: **“For fascism, the State is not the night watchman who concerns himself only with the personal security of citizens. Nor is it an organization with purely material ends, such as guaranteeing a certain well-being or relatively peaceful social relations, in which case a Board of Directors would suffice. Nor is it a creation of pure politics,** without contact with the material and complex reality of the life of individuals and of peoples.”*

“The State, as fascism conceives and realizes it, is a spiritual and moral fact, for it concretizes the political, juridical, and economic organization of the nation; and this organization, in its genesis and in its development, is a manifestation of the spirit. The State is the guarantor of internal and external security, but it is also the guardian and transmitter of the spirit of the people, as it has been formed through the centuries in language, in customs, and in faith. The State is not only the present, but also the past and above all the future. It is the State which, transcending the narrow limits of individual lives, embodies the immanent conscience of the nation. The forms under which States manifest themselves change, but the necessity remains.”

“It is the State which forms individuals in civic virtues, rendering them conscious of their duty, bringing them to unity; it harmonizes their interests in justice; it transmits the conquests of thought in the domain of sciences, arts, law, and human solidarity; it raises men from the elementary life of the tribe to the highest human expression of power, which is empire; it transmits through the centuries the name of those who died for its integrity or to obey its laws; it holds up as example and commends to future generations the captains who expanded its territory and the geniuses who crowned it with glory. When the sense of the State weakens and the dissolving and centrifugal tendencies of individuals or groups prevail, nations move toward their decline.”



“For fascism, the State is the absolute before which individuals and groups are only relative. Individuals and groups are conceivable only within the State.”

The State is the absolute, in this sense: the political community is the “perfect community” (Saint Thomas, De Regno, I, 1), such that individuals and groups are ordered to it, since “that which is imperfect is ordered to that which is perfect” (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 68, 1)—that is to say, they find their end in it.



“For fascism, the State is not the night watchman who concerns himself only with the personal security of the citizens.”

The fascist conception of the State is not liberal. In the doctrine of fascism, the State is not charged merely with watching over the order and security of individuals.

“The City is not a community of place established for the sake of avoiding mutual injustices and permitting exchanges. [...] The City is the community ordered to the good life, that is to say, whose end is a perfect and self-sufficient life” (Aristotle, Politics, III).

“[Leo XIII] does not fear to teach that the State is not only guardian of order and law, but that it must also energetically strive so that, through the whole system of laws and institutions, the constitution and administration of society may naturally cause the public good life to flourish” (Pius XI, Quadragesimo anno).



“It is not, moreover, an organization with purely material ends, such as that of guaranteeing a certain well-being.”

If the fascist conception of the State is not the liberal conception, neither is it the socialist conception, according to which the finality of the State is purely material or economic order; on the contrary, it holds that the finality of the State is of a spiritual order.

“The end of human society is life according to virtue” (De Regno, II, 3).



“Nor is it merely a creation of pure politics.”

For fascism, the State or the political community is not the result of a “social contract,” but is a natural fact, since man is by nature social and political, and therefore made to live in a State.

“It is natural for man to live in society” (De Regno, I, 1).



“The State, as fascism conceives and realizes it, is a spiritual and moral fact, for it concretizes the political, juridical, and economic organization of the nation, and this organization, in its origin and in its development, is a manifestation of the spirit.”

Since the end of society is unity in virtue, and such an end is spiritual; since it is the task of the State to pursue this end, and since “the effect necessarily resembles its cause, if the cause is perfect” (Summa Theologica, I, 60, 4), it follows that the State is a “spiritual and moral fact,” and that it is consequently “a manifestation of the human spirit.”



“[The State] is also the guardian and the transmitter of the spirit of the people, as it has been formed over the centuries in language, in customs, and in faith.”

Since the State is at the service of the Common Good of the City, and since the Common Good consists in unity (De Regno, I, 2), it follows that the State must make it its goal to preserve the unity of the City.

Now, the unity of a City is built primarily around morals, a faith or a tradition, and multiple customs.

“They [the morals, traditions, and customs of a nation] truly constitute a common patrimony. [...] Is it necessary to add that it is above all they which are responsible for the particular mode in which the Common Good of each nation takes shape?” (Fr. Louis Lachance, *The Political Humanism of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 247–248).



“It is the State which, surpassing the narrow limits of individual lives, incarnates the immanent consciousness of the nation.”

The nation is an individuation of human nature on the collective scale, such that it possesses within itself a consciousness and a will—those of all the members of the nation insofar as they belong to the same nation. Now, the State is to the people what the soul is to the body:

“Since men are numerous and each one provides for his own particular good, their society would disintegrate if there were not some principle providing for the good of this multitude; just as the

body of a man or of any animal whatsoever would fall apart, if there were not within it a common directive force [a soul] tending to the common good of all the members.” (De Regno, I, 1).

Thus, the State is to the nation what form is to matter. It is therefore the State that actualizes, or incarnates, the consciousness and the will of the nation.



“It is the State which forms individuals in civic virtues, makes them conscious of their duty, brings them to unity; it harmonizes their interests in justice; it transmits the conquests of thought in the domains of science, the arts, and law.”

It is the State that *“forms individuals in civic virtues, makes them conscious of their duty”*:

“It is evident that the end of a multitude gathered in society is to live according to virtue: for men unite in order to live well together, an end which the isolated man cannot attain; now, to live well is to live according to virtue; therefore, the end of human society is life according to virtue.” (De Regno, II, 3).

But the end of the State is none other than the common good of its members, and it is the State which has charge of the common good of the City; thus, it falls to the State to make its citizens virtuous.

It is the State that “brings [the citizens] to unity”:

“This is what the one who governs the human community must apply himself to above all: to procure unity.” (ibid., I, 2).

And it is the State which governs the human community.

It is the State that “harmonizes their [the citizens’] interests in justice”: indeed, it is the holder of public force, and **“the general utility of force is to maintain the entire order of justice.”** (Summa Theologiae, II-II, q.123, a.12).

Finally, it is the State that “transmits the conquests of thought in the domains of science, the arts, and law”: since the end of the State is the good life (bene vivere) of the multitude, and since this good life consists chiefly in contemplation, political action, and productive making, it follows that the speculative sciences (beginning with philosophy and theology), law—in the sense of the body of laws that guarantee justice in the City—, and the arts all have a most essential place in the City. Now it belongs to the State to procure the good life for its citizens; thus, it is the natural protector of the sciences, the arts, and the law.



“When the sense of the State weakens and the dissolving and centrifugal tendencies of individuals or groups prevail, nations march toward their decline.”

Since the State plays a preeminent role in human society, and is above all necessary to guarantee its unity, it follows that a nation which loses its sense of the State hastens toward its own ruin.

When the sense of the common good disappears in favor of the particular goods of individuals or social groups, the entire political community collapses.

9. The Unity of the State and the Contradictions of Capitalism

Since 1919, universal economic and political developments have only reinforced this doctrinal position. The State has become a giant. It is the State that can resolve the dramatic contradictions of capitalism. What is called “the crisis” can only be resolved by the State and within the State.

Where now are the shades of Jules Simon, who, at the dawn of liberalism, proclaimed that the State must work to render itself useless and prepare for its own resignation? Where are the shades of McCulloch who, in the second half of the last century, affirmed that the State must beware of governing too much? And what would the Englishman Bentham say — who maintained that industry should ask of the State nothing but to leave it in peace — or the German Humboldt, according to whom the “idle” State should be considered the best, if they were to witness the continual interventions of the State in economic affairs, interventions at once solicited and inevitable? It is true that the second generation of liberal economists was less extreme than the first, and that even Smith himself opened the door — though cautiously — to State interventions in the economic sphere.

If liberalism means the individual, fascism means the State. But the fascist State is unique: it is an original creation. It is not reactionary, but revolutionary, in the sense that it anticipates the solution to certain universal problems:

- *In the political domain: the fragmentation of parties, the abuses of parliamentary power, the irresponsibility of Assemblies.*

- *In the economic domain: the ever-increasing and ever-more-powerful functions of the syndicates, both workers' and employers', with their conflicts as well as their collusion.*
- *In the moral domain: the need for order, for discipline, and for obedience to the moral rules of the fatherland.*

Fascism seeks for the State to be strong, organized, and at the same time to rest on a broad popular base. The fascist State also claimed authority over the economic sphere; and through the corporative, social, and educational institutions it created, the sense of the State extends to the farthest reaches of the country, and within the State all political, economic, and spiritual forces of the nation circulate, structured within their respective organizations.

*A State that relies on millions of individuals who recognize it, feel it, and are ready to serve it, is not the tyrannical State of a medieval lord. It has nothing in common with absolutist States before or after 1789. **The individual in the fascist State is not annulled, but rather multiplied, just as a soldier in a regiment is not diminished, but multiplied by the number of his comrades in arms.*** The fascist State organizes the nation, yet it still leaves individuals a sufficient margin; it has limited freedoms that are unnecessary or harmful, but it has preserved essential freedoms.

In this domain, only the State is the judge, not the individual.



“It is the State that can resolve the dramatic contradictions of capitalism.”

Capitalism has brought with it the disunity of society. Indeed, it has divided society into two “classes”: on one side, the bourgeoisie; on the other, the proletariat. As a result, Marxism and class struggle have emerged.

Yet only political authority can restore a disunited society to unity. And political authority is the State. Therefore, only the State is capable of resolving the contradictions of capitalism. This is precisely the mission that fascism has undertaken: to restore unity to the City, through the State, and within the State.

And this is why, “if liberalism means the individual, fascism means the State”: fascism does not consider the political community as a mere sum of individuals, but as a truly united community; it equates it with the State, which is by nature one.



“The fascist State is unique, and it is an original creation. It is not reactionary, but revolutionary, in the sense that it anticipates the solution to certain universal problems.”

The fascist State is not reactionary, in that it does not seek to “go backward” as if society had not changed, as if no new problems needed to be addressed.

On the contrary, it seeks to confront these new problems; and in this sense, it is “revolutionary.” In particular, it aims to provide the people with a new unity, which is achieved through a sharp national consciousness and a genuine organic integration of the Whole—that

is, a unity of will and action; and this is why it is *both nationalist and organicist*.



“Fascism wants the State to be strong, organized, and at the same time based on a broad popular foundation.”

Since it is the State’s responsibility to ensure the Common Good of the City, it is necessary for it to be strong, or powerful—that is, to possess all the means required to secure it. It must also be organized, because the pursuit of the Common Good requires that everything in the City be arranged so that it can be directed toward the Common Good.

Yet while the fascist State is authoritarian, it is also organicist: it seeks to rely on the largest possible portion of citizens—if not all—because it understands that the Common Good will be more easily achieved when all citizens pursue it voluntarily, in accordance with the State’s directives.

This is why, “the individual in the fascist State is not annulled, but rather multiplied, just as a soldier in a regiment is not diminished, but multiplied by the number of his comrades in arms.” The political community is like an army: when all individuals sacrifice their particular interests to align themselves with the Common Good—which is the triumph of the Whole—they in fact achieve their greatest good, since this victory is also the victory of all.



“The fascist State also claimed authority over the economic sphere.”

Just as there is no form without matter, there is no well-being without life; the economic prosperity of the nation is therefore necessary for the Common Good, or the collective happiness of that nation, to be possible.

And it is the State that is responsible for the Common Good. Thus, it is entirely justified in attending to economic matters, in particular the protection of workers, notably through state-run corporations.

As a reminder: **“Just as, through all these means, the State can be useful to other classes, so too it can greatly improve the condition of the working class. It will do so fully within its rights and without fear of reproach for interference, because by the very nature of its office, the State must serve the Common Good”** (Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*). Catholics sometimes tend to forget this...



“In this domain [the domain of law], only the State is the judge, not the individual.”

Because law—that is, the just distribution of things—is one of the principal components of the Common Good, and because it is the responsibility of the State, not the individual, to determine what is beneficial for the community, it follows that only the State is the judge in matters of law. The fascist State does not recognize “subjective rights” that are not aligned with the Common Good of the City; and it does not tolerate individuals claiming such rights. It

is the State, and not an individual or any other organization, that determines who is entitled to what within the political community.

10. The Fascist State and Religion

“The Fascist State is not indifferent to religious phenomena in general nor does it maintain an attitude of indifference to Roman Catholicism, the special, positive religion of Italians. The State has not got a theology but it has a moral code. The Fascist State sees in religion one of the deepest of spiritual manifestations and for this reason it not only respects religion but defends and protects it. The Fascist State does not attempt, as did Robespierre at the height of the revolutionary delirium of the Convention, to set up a “god” of its own; nor does it vainly seek, as does Bolshevism, to efface God from the soul of man. Fascism respects the God of ascetics, saints, and heroes, and it also respects God as conceived by the ingenuous and primitive heart of the people, the God to whom their prayers are raised.”

“The Fascist State is not indifferent to religious phenomena in general nor does it maintain an attitude of indifference to Roman Catholicism, the special, positive religion of Italians.”

Fascism is inseparable from a religious conception. For fascism is spiritualist: it believes in the transcendent vocation of man; thus, it cannot but affirm the existence of God. But if God exists, then the first of all forms of justice is that which renders to God the worship owed to Him, since everything is due to God, beginning with our very existence. Now this virtue is called the virtue of religion:

“Religion offers its care and its rites to a nature of a higher order which is called divine” (Cicero, *The Republic*); **“It belongs to religion to render to God the honor which is His due”** (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 81, 2). And the virtue of religion, insofar as it pertains to the natural order of things, is therefore **natural** (such a virtue would have existed even in a state of pure nature).

Thus, fascism, which is not only a political but also a moral conception, cannot remain “indifferent to the religious fact in general,” that is, to the natural existence of religion.

But if it does not ignore the religious fact in general, neither can it ignore “that particular positive religion which is Italian Catholicism.” “Positive,” because Catholicism is not a “natural” religion, but a religion instituted by God Himself. And insofar as it is the Religion instituted by God, fascism can regard it only as the Religion par excellence.

Some will say that if Mussolini signed a Concordat with the Holy See (in 1929), if he made “the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Religion [...] the sole Religion of the Italian State,” it was above all for pragmatic reasons, since the Catholic Religion was that of the vast majority of Italians. And this is no doubt true. **But it nonetheless shows fascism’s attachment to Catholicism; for if it had not been attached to it, such a Concordat would never have been signed; and had it been opposed to it, it would not have refrained from attacking it openly: the Convention attacked it even though the majority of the French were Catholics, and Bolshevism fought against the Orthodox religion, even though it was that of nearly the entire Russian people.**

And if fascism recognized the Catholic Religion as “the sole religion,” it is because it is the only religion—namely, the only one that truly binds man to God, the finite to the Infinite. For in order for the finite to be joined to the Infinite, either the finite must become infinite, or the Infinite must become finite; yet the finite cannot make itself infinite by its own strength. Thus, it is for the Infinite to make itself finite, for God to become man, to take flesh, to become incarnate. Now the only religion of the Incarnation is the Catholic Religion, which holds that Christ is none other than the

Second Person of the Holy Trinity incarnate, that He is at once true God and true man.

As a reminder: **“The very nature of God is the essence of goodness, as Dionysius shows. Therefore, everything that belongs to the idea of the good applies to God. Now, it belongs to the idea of the good to communicate itself to others [...]. Thus, it belongs to the idea of the sovereign Good to communicate itself sovereignly to the creature. And this sovereign communication is realized only when God ‘is united to created nature in such a way as to form one single person out of these three realities: the Word, the soul, and the flesh,’ according to St. Augustine. The fittingness of the Incarnation therefore appears evident.”** (Summa Theologica, III, 1, 1).

Consequently, the Catholic Religion is the only one that can truly bear the name of “religion”; and this is why fascism, which cannot remain indifferent to the religious fact—since it is spiritualist—can only adhere to Catholicism.

Whether displeasing to antifascist Catholics—but are such people truly Catholics?—or to anticatholic fascists—but are such people truly fascists?—fascist politics and the Catholic Religion are not only historically, but also essentially linked.



“The State has not got a theology but it has a moral code. The Fascist State sees in religion one of the deepest of spiritual manifestations and for this reason it not only respects religion but defends and protects it.”

When Mussolini affirms that the State is not a “theology” but a “morality,” he means that the political order does not belong to the supernatural order, but rather to the natural order in its spiritual dimension. Indeed, in fascism there is a clear distinction between the supernatural order and the natural order—even in its highest part, which is that of the spirit—and therefore also a clear distinction between religious matters and political matters, together with a categorical rejection of any confusion between these two domains. Now, this is entirely consistent with the spirit of Catholicism, which is the only religion to recognize the autonomy of the political sphere, because it alone recognizes a natural order distinct from the supernatural order: **“There is a divine natural order; and another, supernatural”** (Abbé Julio Meinvielle, Catholic Conception of Politics).

But religion, as we have said, is a natural virtue, and it is even the “deepest manifestation of the human spirit”; thus, it pertains to the spirit, and the latter cannot ignore it. Consequently, **it is rational that the Catholic Religion, which is the only true religion, should also be the religion of the State, insofar as it alone truly merits the name of religion; and even if it is of supernatural essence, it fulfills a natural duty which the State, precisely as natural, cannot disregard.**

Thus, although fascism clearly distinguishes the political sphere from the religious sphere, it does not separate them; rather, it unites them. And this too is fully consistent with a sound Catholic vision of things: **“The State must be Catholic, for everything that is human must by nature render worship to God, and the State is essentially a human reality”** (Abbé Julio Meinvielle, op. cit.).

And this is why the Catholic Religion is “not only respected” by the fascist State, “but also defended and protected.”



“The Fascist State does not attempt, as did Robespierre at the height of the revolutionary delirium of the Convention, to set up a “god” of its own; nor does it vainly seek, as does Bolshevism, to efface God from the soul of man. Fascism respects the God of ascetics, saints, and heroes, and it also respects God as conceived by the ingenuous and primitive heart of the people, the God to whom their prayers are raised.”

Contrary to what has sometimes been claimed, historical fascism never sought to create a new positive religion, as the ideologues of the French Revolution attempted to do; still less did it aim to abolish the religious fact, as did communist regimes, whose materialist essence logically led them to combat everything that proceeded from the spirit.

On the contrary, fascism, insofar as it is both “realist” and “spiritualist,” adheres to the Catholic Religion, which, as Mussolini rightly observed, is indeed that “of ascetics, of saints, and of heroes.”

One must recall, in this regard, the authentically virile essence of the Catholic Religion, which is a message of faith and combat, of patience and perseverance, of self-denial and sacrifice.

A message with which fascism is—one may readily admit—in perfect accord.

11. Empire and Discipline

“The fascist State is a will to power and domination. The Roman tradition here is an idea of strength. In the doctrine of fascism, empire is not merely a territorial, military, or commercial expression, but also a spiritual and moral one. One can conceive of an empire—that is, a nation which, directly or indirectly, guides other nations—without the conquest of a single square kilometer of territory being necessary. For fascism, the aspiration to empire—that is, the expansion of nations—is a manifestation of vitality; its opposite, the spirit of domestic withdrawal, is a sign of decadence. Peoples that are born or reborn are imperialist; peoples that die are renouncers.

*Fascism is the doctrine most apt to embody the tendencies and the state of soul of a people such as the Italian people, who are resurrecting after long centuries of neglect or foreign servitude. But empire requires discipline, the coordination of efforts, duty, and sacrifice. And this explains many aspects of the practical action of the Regime: the direction impressed upon the multiple forces of the State, and **the necessary severity toward those who would oppose this spontaneous and inevitable movement of the life of the twentieth century**, opposing it by brandishing the outdated ideologies of the nineteenth century—ideologies repudiated wherever bold experiments of political and social transformation have been undertaken. At this moment more than ever, peoples thirst for authority, for direction, and for order. If each century has its doctrine, countless signs indicate that that of the present century is fascism. Fascism is a doctrine of life, for it has inspired a faith; and that faith has conquered souls, for fascism has had its dead and its martyrs.*

The doctrine of fascism now possesses, throughout the world, the universality that belongs to all doctrines which, in becoming actualized, embody an epoch in the history of the human spirit.”

“The fascist State is a will to power and domination. The Roman tradition here embodies an idea of strength.”

At first glance, this assertion may seem more in keeping with a paganizing Nietzschean outlook than with Thomistic philosophy.

However, it is important to recall that the virtue of fortitude, and the accompanying will to overcome, have a legitimate place within the moral framework of Saint Thomas—and, one could even say, a relatively significant one.

It therefore seems appropriate to pause for a moment and consider the importance of this virtue.

Among the four cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance—fortitude is perhaps the most overlooked in our time, regrettably even among a large number of Catholics.

It is a fact that the notions associated with the virtue of fortitude—convictions, the values and goods for which one stands, the fidelity required by such commitments, and the sacrifices demanded by this fidelity—are largely devalued today. How can one speak of convictions in a society saturated with liberalism and for which truth is considered nonexistent? How can one speak of fidelity when one of the primary fidelities, marital fidelity, is mocked? How can one speak of sacrifice in a world devoted to comfort? The virtue of fortitude stands in direct opposition to the very spirit of modernity.

For reference, fortitude is above all the firmness of the soul in pursuing the good: **“Fortitude, considered as a certain firmness of the soul, is virtue in general, or rather the general condition of all virtue”** (Saint Thomas, Summa Theologica, II-II, 123, 2); **“Fortitude, eminently summarizing in itself the condition necessary for all virtue—namely, firmness in the good—is rightly considered a cardinal virtue”** (ibid., II-II, 123, 11). Thus, fortitude holds a central place within moral philosophy.

Fortitude is a firmness of the soul in the face of bodily dangers and those that threaten the very essence of man:

“[The virtue of fortitude] does not consist solely in standing firm against bodily peril, but in maintaining the essence of man, and above all his nature as a ‘political animal,’ both in the natural and supernatural order, against the increasingly numerous dangers that threaten it with death, and in counterattacking the enemies that swarm around it and attempt to enslave it, to transform it, or to annihilate it” (Marcel De Corte, De la force).

The ultimate purpose of fortitude is the good, that is, justice: **“Fortitude has a general utility, which is to uphold the entire order of justice”** (Summa Theologica, II-II, 123, 12).

The principle of fortitude is twofold: it is both natural and supernatural. “Saint Thomas does not even separate here [in the question on fortitude] the supernatural order from the natural order. Martyrdom, for him, is an act of human fortitude elevated by grace. Thus there is only one virtue of fortitude, but it operates on two vertically distinct levels according to the two ends it sustains. ‘In the act of fortitude, two things must be considered: the good in which the strong remain steadfast, which fortitude aims to achieve; and the firmness that makes one invincible to anything that would detach one from this good, which constitutes the very essence of

fortitude. Just as natural fortitude keeps man faithful to human justice and enables him to defend it at the risk of his life, so supernatural fortitude makes man steadfast in the justice of God, which is accessed through the faith of Jesus Christ' (Romans 3:22). Faith, to which one remains attached, is therefore the end of the martyr's act; fortitude is the habitus that produces this act" (Marcel De Corte, op. cit.). In other words, it is the same virtue exercised by the soldier who dies for his country and the martyr who dies for the faith.

Fortitude has two primary aspects: *sustinere*, which is the act of enduring the trials imposed upon us, and *agredi*, which is to confront the evils that it falls to us to overcome. **"The virtue of fortitude functions to remove obstacles that prevent the will from obeying reason. Retreating in the face of difficulty is characteristic of fear, which recoils before a hard-to-conquer evil. Therefore, fortitude principally addresses fear of difficulties, which might otherwise hinder the will from remaining faithful to reason. Moreover, it requires not only firmly enduring the shocks of adversity by restraining fear, but also actively confronting them in a measured manner when necessary to secure the future, which is evidently the function of courage. Thus, fortitude deals both with fear, which it represses, and audacity, which it directs"** (Summa Theologica, II-II, 123, 3).

Marcel De Corte clarifies the meaning of "measured" here: **"One must not misunderstand the sense Aristotle and Saint Thomas attribute to moderation, to measure. To moderate does not mean weak or faint [...]. Measure does not imply restraint or slowness. Moderation does not entail the total exclusion of fear [...]. Fortitude includes a certain fear that is mastered and thereby enables the one who experiences it to not recoil from the arduousness of the**

object, while preserving the full awareness of its difficulty. It also includes a disciplined audacity that does not blindly rush into danger. Fortitude is not a mean between fear and audacity, nor a mixture of the two on the same plane. It occupies a higher plane, controlling the concrete reality of their object [...]. Fortitude is a virtue of the soul. It informs fear and audacity as form informs matter. It thus determines their quality and quantity, evaluates them, marks their limits. Being their rule, it imposes itself upon them. In a hierarchy, it occupies a rank above them.” (De la force).

Thus, while fear must be restrained, audacity must be directed—that is, oriented toward an end conforming to reason. Of the two aspects of fortitude, the more essential is the first, namely *sustinere*, for it is harder to repress fear than to direct audacity:

“The virtue of fortitude, defined in its essence by its highest degree, will thus be found more in the act of enduring danger by dispelling fear than in the act of bringing audacity to its proper measure” (ibid.).

Yet *agredi* should not be forgotten, for it too is important, especially in an age when not only the supernatural order but also the natural order are under attack from every side:

“Because the principal act of fortitude is to resist, one should not conclude that it consists solely in defense [...]. The virtue of fortitude implies, secondarily but necessarily, attack” (ibid.).

Fortitude, together with justice—which is radically the act of ordering oneself to the common good of the City—are the two most important cardinal virtues; in fact, they are intimately connected:

“The correlation between justice and fortitude,” says Saint Thomas, “consists in this: fortitude has as its object difficulties, and it is a vast one—not only to perform the works of virtue commonly called works of justice, directed toward the common good [...], but also to do so with that insatiable desire which can be called the hunger and thirst for justice” (ibid.).

Unfortunately, many Catholics reject the idea of fortitude in the name of the meekness of Christ (just as many reject honor or service to the City in the name of His preached humility).

To such Catholics, it must be reminded that:

“If one must learn from Jesus Christ that He is gentle, one must no less learn from Him that He is strong. Just as there is a necessary gentleness, there is also a forbidden gentleness; and just as there is forbidden hatred, forbidden anger, forbidden violence, there is also a hatred, anger, and violence that are rightly ordered” (Mgr Gay, Sermons d’Avent).

From a Thomist perspective, fortitude is a cardinal virtue, and in a sense even the highest virtue. This is what Mgr Freppel, the great architect of the revival of Thomism in the 19th century, said:

“Among the cardinal virtues, there is one that has a more marked character of grandeur and nobility. It is the one that sustains us in both good and bad fortune, raising us above all the vicissitudes of this world. Souls rise or fall with it—active and generous when it communicates its impulse to them, languishing and inert when it fails to do so. All the energy in the moral world flows from this primary source: civil courage, military virtue, priestly

devotion, firmness in the exercise of sovereign authority”
(Pastoral Letter on the Virtue of Fortitude, February 9, 1890).

What is certain is that fortitude, in our contemporary age marked by liberalism, is the most necessary of virtues:

“The virtue of fortitude—vanished [in our century] from the vocabulary of politicians and ecclesiastics—is today the virtue par excellence, without which the return to intellectual, aesthetic, moral, political, and religious health for humanity, attacked on all sides, is strictly impossible” (Marcel De Corte, op. cit.).

When Mussolini thus defines Roman tradition in general, and fascism in particular, as an “idea of force,” when he expresses his desire to revivify the Italian people at a time when weakness had already gained ground among individuals—including Catholics—the political society and the Church itself, we believe he is entirely in harmony with Thomist philosophy and true Catholic morality.



“In the doctrine of fascism, empire is not merely a territorial, military, or commercial expression, but also a spiritual and moral one. One can conceive of an empire—that is, a nation which, directly or indirectly, guides other nations—without the conquest of a single square kilometer of territory being necessary.”

Fascism is colonialist, yes. But not in the sense in which the French Republic understood colonization.

For fascism, colonization is the “spiritual and moral” domination of an objectively superior culture—that is, a culture that is objectively more universal, more representative of human nature—over inferior

cultures. Its purpose is therefore to elevate the colonized peoples, not to exploit them.

But this presupposes, indeed, that there exist cultures objectively meant to dominate and others meant to be dominated—not merely on a material or economic level, but on a spiritual, intellectual, and moral plane. It presupposes the acceptance of an inequality between cultures.

Such a vision of things rests on a foundational inegalitarianism: the doctrine according to which there are no equal individuals, and a fortiori, no equal peoples. This is precisely the doctrine of the Ancients, in particular Aristotle and Saint Thomas:

“Authority and obedience are not only necessary things; they are also good things. Some beings, from the moment they are born, are destined, some to obey, others to command, albeit with very diverse degrees and nuances for each” (Politics, I, 2, On Slavery).

“If a man is superior to another in knowledge and justice, it is shocking that he should not employ this superiority in the service of others. In this sense it is written: ‘As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another’ (1 Peter 4:10)” (Summa Theologica, I, 96, 4).

Thus, the strongest, the most intelligent, and the most virtuous are called, by nature, to rule over others—for their good. Pius XI himself recalled:

“It is false that all men have the same rights in civil society, and that there exists no legitimate hierarchy” (Divini Redemptoris).

And what holds true on the individual level also holds on the collective level. It is therefore legitimate that the nations most spiritually advanced should govern, in a

sense, the other nations—without, however, taking away their sovereignty, since the City remains “the perfect community.”



“The aspiration to empire—that is, to the expansion of nations—is a manifestation of vitality; its opposite, the domestic and sedentary spirit, is a sign of decadence. Peoples who are being born or reborn are imperialist; peoples who are dying are renouncers.”

Since a culture is, so to speak, an individuation of human nature on the political level—that is, the most universal individuation of human nature—it is natural and legitimate for a culture to desire universality, and consequently, to seek to universalize itself when it has the means to do so.

It is therefore indeed a sign of vitality, for a nation, to strive to exercise a certain magisterium over other nations.



Mussolini then speaks of the *“necessary severity against those who would oppose this movement,”* namely the Fascist movement.

The Fascist State has often been reproached for the violence it exercised against its opponents.

But once one understands that it proposed nothing other than the pursuit of the Common Good, and that those who oppose the

Common Good are “worse than beasts” (St. Thomas), because they oppose the highest good of all, one understands that there exists an “ordered violence” (Mgr. Gay) against such people. And this is why the Fascist State did not hesitate to show severity toward its enemies, including the so-called “Christian Democrats,” who were in fact objectively aligned with the revolutionary cause.



“The people thirst for authority, for direction, and for order.”

Once again, this accords perfectly with a realistic vision of things. Indeed, in a political society, the multitude is the material cause, the order of this multitude is the formal cause, the authority which governs it is the efficient cause, and the direction or good pursued by authority is the final cause. Now, by nature, matter desires form in order to attain its good; but this form can only be received through an external agent, since matter cannot inform itself. Thus, by nature, a people desires an authority which, in order to lead it to its good, gives it order—that is to say, unity within plurality.

“It is also necessary that there be among men a principle directing the multitude. For men are many, and each provides for his own particular interest, so their society would lose its unity if there were not a principle providing for the good of this multitude; just as the body of a man, or of any animal, would disintegrate if there were not in that body some common directing force tending to the good of all the members. [...] Every multitude must therefore have a directing principle.” (St. Thomas, *De Regno*, I, 1)

Such a principle of direction and unity of the people is what we properly call political authority.

The triptych “authority, direction, order” therefore perfectly sums up both realistic politics and Fascist politics.



Finally, “the doctrine of Fascism now possesses, throughout the entire world, the universality that belongs to all doctrines which, in becoming actual, represent an epoch in the history of the human spirit.”

Thus does Mussolini conclude his Doctrine of Fascism.

It is a conclusion we readily make our own, insofar as—according to what has been established—it is clear that Fascism is, for our contemporary age, the incarnation of the political doctrine of St. Thomas, and more generally of realistic politics.

May the Thomists who are not Fascists finally come to understand it.